JUNE 1960 35C

THE saint MYSTERY MAGAZINE

edited by
LESLIE CHARTERIS

THE SAINT & THE DAMSEL IN DISTRESS

ALL NEW
Stories by
AUGUST DERLETH
WENZELL BROWN
GEORGE FIELDING ELIOT
AVRAM DAVIDSON

On May 31, 1790, the first United States copyright law was signed by President George Washington, and practically nothing has been done since then to detract from its creaky antiquity. The thinking in those days was only about a century removed from the period when writers, like actors, were viewed with vague suspicion as being eccentric at best, probably loose of morals, and potential trouble-makers, therefore only by condescention entitled some semblance of civil rights. As for the product of their talents, entertaining as it might be, it was not to be considered as any more real and durable a property than the antics of a clown.

In 1887, the Bern Convention to regularize copyright laws internationally was signed by practically all civilized nations of that time, among which the United States did not include itself. Every attempt since then to bring America into the Convention has been blocked by Congress.

America today is about the only country of any importance where a man's writings are not automatically his copyright simply because he wrote them, wherever he wrote them, whether published or not, or wherever published, without filing, fee-paying, or any superfluous formality.

America is also about the only country of importance where a man's copyright in his own creation, no matter how formally protected, can expire before he does, if he starts young and survives to a reasonably old age, so that even in his own lifetime he can see his work pass into what is delightfully called "the public domain", and be reprinted by anyone without fee or royalty, while he may be reduced to panhandling for a cup of coffee.

This Congressional bias might be understandable if there existed a powerful lobby of publishers bent on protecting their legalized right to steal; but there is no such pressure. To the eternal and almost incredible credit of their trade, no publisher of any standing has ever taken advantage of a technical flaw in the copyright to pirate the work of a living author, and all of them whom I know would be only too glad to see the United States fall in line with the other civilized nations. The obduracy of a Government whose only important companion outside the pale, in this respect, is Soviet Russia, remains one of the most baffling and exasperatingly nonsensical phenomena of this age.

More about this next month.

Charles

Make Money Writing Short Paragraphs

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The successful men and women in this field had such a good thing that they kept it pretty well to themselves. Mr. Benson Barrett was one of these people. For years he enjoyed a steady income — made enough money in spare time to pay for a fine farm on the outskirts of Chicago.

Finally, Mr. Barrett decided to let others in on the secret. Since then he has shown a number of other men and women how to write for money. He has not had to give them any lessons in writing. He has not asked them to go through any long course of study or practice. In fact, most of his protégés have started mailing contributions to magazines within two weeks after starting with his plan.

Mr. Barrett says that the only skill required is that the aspiring author be able to write a sentence in plain English. Almost anyone with a common school education can write well enough to follow Mr. Barrett's plan, because the contributions you will send to magazines are rarely more than one paragraph in length.

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Mr. Barrett does not teach you to write. He shows you *what* to write, what *form* to put it in, and *who to send it to*. He shows you a simple method for *getting ideas* by the hundreds. He gives you a list of more than *200 magazines* that are looking for this kind of material and will buy from beginners. In other words, he teaches you a method, an angle, a plan for starting to write right away for money.

IF you would like to see your writing in print and get paid for it — just send your name on a postcard to Mr. Barrett. He will send full information about his plan of coaching by return mail — postage prepaid. He makes no charge for this information. And, no salesman will call on you. You decide, at home, whether you'd like to try his plan. If the idea of writing twenty or thirty short paragraphs a week and getting back a lot of small checks appeals to you, ask Mr. Barrett for this information.

No telling where it might lead. Such a small start might even open opportunities for real authorship. And, since it can't cost you anything more than a postcard, you'll certainly want to get all the facts. Address postcard to Mr. Benson Barrett, 7464 N. Clark Street, Dept. 22956-S, Chicago 26, Illinois.

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AN EDITORIAL ASIDE

The point is often made, increasingly so in recent years, that writers should remain writers and not take an undue interest in matters which do not concern them professionally.

Or if they do so, they should please refrain from involving their professional brethren in these interests.

This makes sense up to a point, but what disturbs me is the insistence that the writer must not bring this or that issue before these people who, one assumes, are as aware as he (or she) is that the world is round, and that there are problems in these times—often profoundly disturbing problems—preoccupation with which is our common responsibility as citizens, taking equal pride in the traditions and in the future of this country.

The suggestion that we can somehow stand outside the stresses and strains of these times is as disturbing to this writer as is the documented suggestion, to some, that political assassinations do not belong exclusively in the pages of yesterday's Eric Ambler or, for that matter, in E. Phillips Oppenheim. We cannot, I feel, ignore the world around us—however much we may, at times, wish to do so—which is why Wenzell Brown's carefully researched novels about teen-age crime in our cities are so important to the lay readers who seek to understand the reasons for this sickness which cuts across class and race barriers, and why, equally so, the fiction of a writer like George Fielding Eliot, the noted military analyst, has equal factual impact.

In this month's *Saint*, however, as he has done before, Wenzell Brown turns away from this socio-documentary approach, and considers, instead, the impact upon each other of two young men, superficially so alike and still so different.

George Fielding Eliot tells an extremely probable story, set in Spain, while Avram Davidson returns with a gently ironic story of how fame comes—briefly—to an unimportant man in an (in terms of headlines) unimportant town.

And August Derleth returns with another superb pastiche of Solar Pons who, more than any other, comes close to equalling in genius the stature of the man who lived at 221-B Baker Street. . . .

HANS STEFAN SANTESSON

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Give Me One Evening And I'll Give You A Push-Button Memory

Yes! Here at last is your chance to gain the *super-powered, file-cabinet memory you've always dreamed about*... so easily and so quickly that you'll be astounded ...AND ACTUALLY DO IT WITHOUT RISKING A PENNY!

Let me explain! I don't care how poor you may *think* your memory is now! I believe that you have a memory 10 TO 20 TIMES MORE POWERFUL THAN YOU REALIZE TODAY! I believe that your memory is working at a tiny fraction of its true power today—*because you simply don't know the right way to feed it facts!* Because you don't know the right way to take names and faces and anything else you want to remember—*and burn them into your memory so vividly that you can never forget them!*

Yes! Remembering is a trick! Powerful memories can be made to order—you don't have to be born with them! The secret of a super-powered, hair-trigger memory is as simple as tying your shoelace! I can teach it to you in a single evening! *And I'm willing to prove it to you without your risking a penny!* Here's how!

Would You Invest Three Hours of Your Time to Transform Your Memory?

All I ask from you is this. Let me send you—at my risk—one of the most fascinating books you have ever read. When this book arrives, set aside only one evening. Give this book your uninterrupted attention. *And then get ready for one of the most thrilling accomplishments of your entire life!*

Take this book and turn to page 39. Read eight short pages—no more! And then, put down the book. Review in your own mind the one simple secret I've shown you. *And then—get ready to test your new, AUTOMATIC memory!*

What you are going to do, in that very first evening, is this! without referring to the book, you are going to sit down, and you are going to write—not five, not ten, but TWENTY important facts that you have never been able to memorize before! If you are a business man, they may be customers' orders that you have received . . . if you are a salesman, they may be twenty different products in your line . . . if you are a student, they may be the twenty parts of your homework . . . if you are a housewife, they may be important appointments that you have to keep tomorrow!

In any case, you are simply going to glance over that list again for a few moments. *You are going to perform a simple mental trick on each one of these facts—that will burn that fact into your mind, permanently and automatically!* And then you are going to put that list away. You're going to bed without thinking of it again.

And the next morning, you are going to amaze your family and friends! When you go down to business, you'll attend to every one of those orders—*automatically*—without referring to your memo pad! For perhaps the first time in your life, you'll be able to *plan ahead your entire day*—automatically, in your own mind—without being a slave to reminders, or notes, or other "paper crutches!"

Yes! And you'll amaze your friends by remembering every product in your line—backwards and forwards—in the exact order that you memorized them! You'll keep every single appointment on time—*because one appointment will automatically flash into your mind after another—at the precise moment you need them—exactly as though you pushed a mental button!*

All this—in a single evening! Here is a gift that will pay you dividends for as long as you live! *A simple trick . . . a simple secret of burning facts into your memory that may change your entire life!*

Suddenly, Whole New Worlds of Self-Confidence Open Up for You!

But this is just the beginning of the "miracles" you can perform with your memory! This secret is just one of the over 50 MEMORY INTENSIFIERS contained in this book! You have seen men and women use these exact same methods on television to astound you! *But you never knew how incredibly simple they were—once you learned the inside secret!*

For instance—REMEMBERING NAMES AND FACES! How many times have you been embarrassed, because you couldn't remember the name of the person you were talking to . . . or introduce him to a friend! *In as little as one short week after you receive this book,* how would you like to walk into a room full of TWENTY new people . . . meet each one of them only once . . . *and then remember the names—automatically—for as long as you live!*

Yes! These names and faces are filed in the storehouse of your memory—permanently! Whenever you meet these people on the street . . . whenever you bump into them at the club . . . whenever they drop in unexpectedly at a friend's house—*the instant you see their face, their name pops into your mind automatically!* There is no hesitation, no embarrassment! *By the time you can reach out to shake their hands, your memory has delivered all the important facts you need to please them!*

Think of the advantage in business—when you can call every customer by his first name—and then ask for his wife and children, instantly, by *their* names! Think of the impression you'll make when you ask him about the state of his business, about his hobbies, when you even repeat—almost word for word—the last conversation you had with him! Think of becoming a celebrity at your club—as the member who "knows everyone" . . . who can be depended upon to avoid mistakes, to win new friends for the organization, to get things done!

But this is still just the beginning! This book teaches you to *remember exactly what you hear and read!* It gives you the confidence you need to make an important point at a business conference . . . to back up your opinion in discussions . . . become a *leader* in conversation, with dozens of interesting facts at your fingertips!

This book teaches you how to memorize a speech, or a sales presentation—in minutes! It teaches you how to remember every card played when you relax at night! It can improve your gin, or poker, or bridge game by

MEET HARRY LORAYNE "The human being with the most phenomenal memory in the world!" Harry Lorayne has lectured in front of thousands of Americans! Rotarians, Elks, Masons, Chamber of Commerce groups have all called on this amazing man to prove the business and social power of a strong, reliable memory! Lorayne's memory is so strong that he can remember the names, faces, addresses and occupations of over 700 different people in a single evening—after meeting each one of them only once!

And yet, a few short years ago, this man's memory was no better than yours! This man trained his own memory—he built the most fabulous memory in the world from scratch! And now he gives you the very same secrets he discovered and perfected himself! Memory Builders that work overnight! Secrets that can change your entire life in a single week—OR EVERY CENT OF YOUR MONEY BACK!

Read the thrilling details on this page! Try them—ENTIRELY AT OUR RISK!

100% in a single week!

This book shows you how to improve the depth and force and power of your mind! It shows you how to double your vocabulary . . . learn dozens of ways to burn new words into your memory . . . learn their meanings without looking them up . . . repeat entire phrases, sentences, paragraphs from the great writers! You'll be able to learn a foreign language almost overnight – at least three to four times as quickly and easily as you could without this system! You'll be able to hear a joke, story or anecdote only once, and then repeat it in the same hilarious way!

Yes! And most important of all, this book will show you how to *professionally organize your mind* – do what you have to do in *half* the time! You'll remember dates, addresses, appointments—automatically! You'll carry dozens of telephone numbers in the file-cabinet of your mind! You'll stop going back over work two or three times because you'd forgotten something! *Let me send you this book – and prove these facts in one short evening – OR IT DOESN'T COST YOU A PENNY!*

Try It Entirely at My Risk!

The name of this book is HOW TO DEVELOP A SUPER-POWER MEMORY! I believe that this book is revolutionary – because it proves, once and for all, that memory improvement *can* be fun . . . it *can* be exciting . . . it *can* be passed from one person to another—automatically!

This book is a word-for-word copy of my regular mail-order course, which I sell for $25. However, the book costs you only $2.98! *And I want you to try this book – in your own home – entirely at my risk!* Here's how!

First, try for yourself the experiment I have described in this article! *See for yourself the almost-unbelievable results in the very first evening alone!* And then, continue to use the book for an additional week! In this very first week alone, if this amazing book doesn't do everything I say . . . if it doesn't give you a file-cabinet memory – no matter what your age – no matter how poor you may think your memory is today – *then simply return the book for every cent of your money back!*

You have nothing to lose! Act TODAY!

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From the top newspapers in America! Enthusiastic raves of Harry Lorayne's new automatic memory improver! Read what top, hardboiled critics say about this man — and his wonderful method.

Robert Coleman, New York Mirror, ... a swell party . . . The stellar entertainer was Harry Lorayne, billed as "The man who has the most phenomenal memory in the world." After watching Harry at work, we were inclined to agree with that statement!

Ruth Ruzzie, WNNT, Virginia . . . this book is fascinating reading . . . Harry Lorayne states this emphatically . . . THERE IS NO SUCH THING AS A POOR MEMORY . . . ONLY A TRAINED OR UNTRAINED MEMORY. He shows in this fascinating book how to easily train your own memory to retain facts . . . figures . . . places . . . people and whatever you wish to remember . . . how to quickly memorize speeches or facts that you wish to remember for future use . . . I found HOW TO DEVELOP A SUPER-POWER MEMORY an experience in reading.

Ed Galing, Pennsylvania Intelligencer, ... Have you ever wished you had a better memory? That you could remember names, places, things? Well, Sir, a new book just out is guaranteed to improve your memory and you will be able to amaze your friends with your feats of memory . . . "HOW TO DEVELOP A SUPER-POWER MEMORY," by Harry Lorayne. The author can call more than 700 persons by their first name after meeting them for the first time . . . The book contains the secret on how to be a good rememberer . . . If you're having trouble remembering a phone number or an anniversary give this book a try. It could make you happy, successful, rich.

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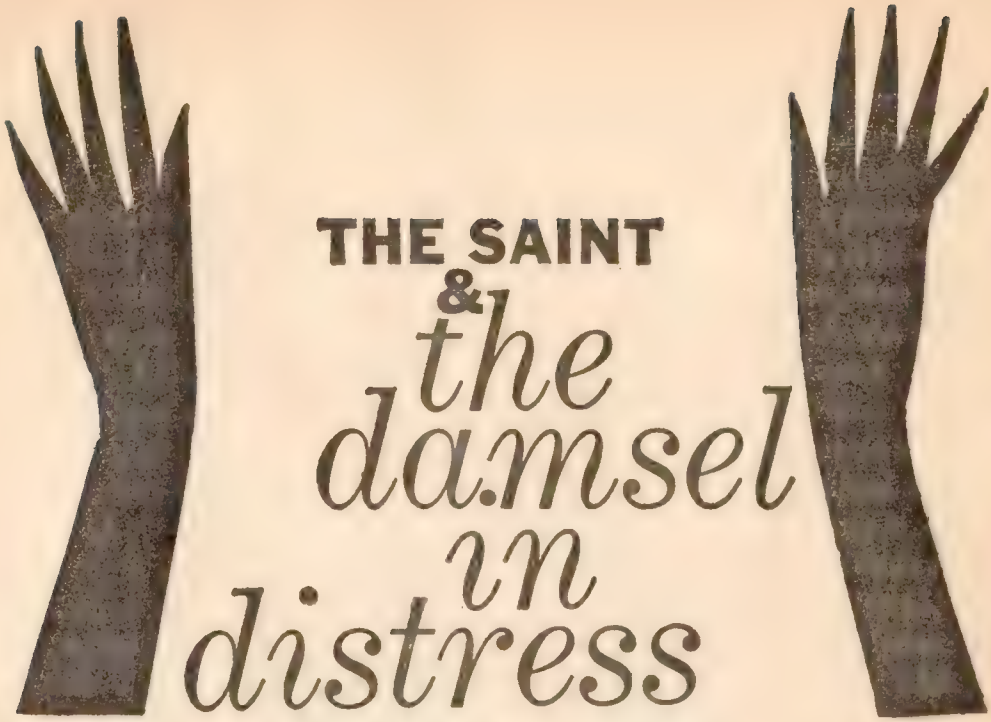


THE SAINT & the damsel in distress

by LESLIE CHARTERIS

You need brains in this life of crime," Simon Templar would say sometimes; "but I often think you need luck even more."

He might have added that the luck had to be consistent.

Mr. Giuseppe Rolfieri was lucky up to a point, for he happened to be in Switzerland when the astounding Liverpool Municipal Bond forgery was discovered. It was a simple matter for him to slip over the border into his own native country; and when his four partners in the swindle stumbled down the narrow stairway that leads from the dock of the Old Bailey to the terrible blind years of penal servitude, he was comfortably installed in his villa at San Remo with no vengeance to fear from the Law. For it is a principle of international law that no man can be extradicted from his own country, and Mr. Rolfieri was lucky to have retained his Italian citizenship even though he had made himself a power in the City of London.

Simon Templar read about the case—he could hardly have helped it, for it was one of those sensational scandals which rock the financial world once in a lifetime—but it did not strike him as a matter for his intervention. Four out of the five conspirators, including the ring-

leader, had been convicted and sentenced; and although it is true that there was a certain amount of public indignation at the immunity of Mr. Rolfieri, it was inevitable that the Saint, in his career of shameless lawlessness, sometimes had to pass up one inviting prospect in favour of another nearer to hand. He couldn't be everywhere at once—it was one of the very few human limitations which he was ready to admit.

A certain Domenick Naccaro, however, had other ideas.

He called at the Saint's apartment on Piccadilly one morning—a stout bald-headed man in a dark blue suit and a light blue waistcoat, with an unfashionable stiff collar and a stringy black tie and a luxuriant scroll of black moustache ornamenting his face—and for the first moment of alarm Simon wondered if he had been mistaken for somebody else of the same name but less respectable morals, for Signor Naccaro was accompanied by a pale pretty girl who carried a small infant swathed in a shawl.

"Is this-a Mr. Templar I have-a da honour to spik to?" asked Naccaro, doffing his bowler elaborately.

"This is one Mr. Templar," admitted the Saint cautiously.

"Ha!" said Mr. Naccaro. "It is-a da Saint himself?"

"So I'm told," Simon answered.

"Then you are da man we look-a for," stated Mr. Naccaro, with profound conviction.

As if taking it for granted that all the necessary formalities had therewith been observed, he bowed the girl in, bowed himself in after her, and stalked into the living-room. Simon closed the door and followed the deputation with a certain curious amusement.

"Well, brother," he murmured, taking a cigarette from the box on the table. "Who are you, and what can I do for you?"

The flourishing bowler hat bowed the girl into one chair, bowed its owner into another, and came to rest on its owner's knees.

"Ha!" said the Italian, rather like an acrobat announcing the conclusion of a trick. "I am Domenick Naccaro!"

"That must be rather nice for you," murmured the Saint amiably. He waved his cigarette towards the girl and her bundle. "Did you come here to breed?"

"That," said Mr. Naccaro, "is-a my daughter Maria. And in her arms she hold-as a leedle baby. A baby," he said, with his black eyes suddenly swimming, "wis-a no father."

"Careless of her," Simon remarked. "What does the baby think about it?"

"Da father," said Mr. Naccaro, contradicting himself dramatically, "is-a Giuseppe Rolfieri."

Simon's brows came down in a straight line, and some of the bantering amusement fell back below the surface of his blue eyes. He hitched one hip on to the edge of the table and swung his foot thoughtfully.

"How did this happen?" he asked.

"I keep-a da small-a restaurant in-a Soho," explained Mr. Naccaro. "Rolfieri, he come-a there often to eat-a da spaghetti. Maria, she sit at-a da desk and take-a da money. You, *signor*, you see-a how-a she is beautiful. Rolfieri, he notice her. When-a he pay his bill, he stop-a to talk-a wis her. One day he ask-a her to go out wis him."

Mr. Naccaro took out a large chequered handkerchief and dabbed his eyes. He went on, waving his hands in broken eloquence.

"I do not stop her. I think-a Rolfieri is-a da fine gentleman, and it is nice-a for my Maria to go out wis him. Often, they go out. I tink-a that Maria perhaps she makes-a presently da good-a marriage, and I am glad for her. Then, one day, I see she is going to have-a da baby."

"It must have been a big moment," said the Saint gravely.

"I say to her, 'Maria, what have-a you done?' " recounted Mr. Naccaro, flinging out his arms. "She will he not tell-a me." Mr. Naccaro shut his mouth firmly. "But presently she confess it is-a Rolfieri. I beat-a my breast." Mr. Naccaro beat his breast. "I say, 'I will keell-a heem; but first-a he shall marry you.' "

Mr. Naccaro jumped up with native theatrical effect.

"Rolfieri does-a not come any more to eat-a da spaghetti. I go to his office, and they tell me he is-a not there. I go to his house, and they tell me he is-a not there. I write-a letters, and he does-a not answer. Da time is going so quick. Presently I write-a da letter and say: "If you do not-a see me soon I go to da police.' He answer that one. He say he come soon. But he does-a not come. Then he is-a go abroad. He write again, and say he come-a to see me when he get back. But he does not-a come back. One day I read in da paper that he is-a da criminal, and da police are already look-a for him. So Maria she have-a da baby—and Rolfieri will-a never come back!"

Simon nodded.

"That's very sad," he said sympathetically. "But what can I do about it?"

Mr. Naccaro mopped his brow, put away his large chequered handkerchief, and sat down again.

"You are-a da man who help-a da poor people, no?" he said pleadingly. "You are-a da Saint who always work-a to make justice?"

"Yes, but——"

"Then it is settled. You help-a me. Listen, *signor*, everything, everything is-a arrange. I have-a da good friends in England and in-a San Remo, and we put-a da money together to make-a this right. We kidnap-a Rolfieri. We bring him here in da aeroplane. But we do not-a know anyone who can fly. You, *signor*, you can fly-a da aeroplane." Mr. Naccaro suddenly fell on his knees and flung out his arms, "See, *signor*—I humble myself. I kiss-a your feet. I beg-a you to help us and not let Maria have-a da baby wis-a no father!"

Simon allowed the operatic atmosphere to play itself out, and thereafter listened with a seriousness from which his natural superficial amusement did not detract at all. It was an appeal of the kind which he heard sometimes, for the name of the Saint was known to people who dreamed of his assistance as well as to those who lived in terror of his attentions, and he was never entirely deaf to the pleadings of those troubled souls who came to his home with a pathetic faith in miracles.

Mr. Naccaro's proposition was more practical than most.

He and his friends, apparently, had gone into the problem of avenging the wickedness of Giuseppe Rolfieri with the conspiratorial instinct of professional vendettists. One of them had become Mr. Rolfieri's butler in the villa at San Remo. Others, outside, had arranged the abduction down to a precise time-table. Mr. Naccaro himself had acquired an old farmhouse in Kent at which Rolfieri was to be held prisoner, with a large field adjoining it at which an aeroplane could land. The aeroplane itself had been bought, and was ready for use at Brooklands Aerodrome. The only unit lacking was a man qualified to fly it.

Once Rolfieri had been taken to the farmhouse, how would they force him through the necessary marriage?

"We make-a him," was all that Naccaro would say, but he said it with grim conviction.

When the Saint finally agreed to take the job, there was another scene of operatic gratitude which surpassed all previous demonstrations. Money was offered; but Simon had already decided that in this case the entertainment was its own reward. He felt pardonably exhausted when at last Domenick Naccaro, bowing and scraping and

yammering incoherently, shepherded his daughter, his illegitimate grandchild, and his own curling whiskers out of the apartment.

The preparations for his share in the abduction occupied Simon Templar's time for most of the following week. He drove down to Brooklands and tested the plane which the syndicate had purchased —it was an ancient Avro which must have secured its certificate of airworthiness by the skin of its ailerons, but he thought it would complete the double journey, given luck and good weather. Then there was a halfway refuelling base to be established somewhere in France— a practical necessity which had not occurred to the elemental Mr. Naccaro. Friday had arrived before he was able to report that he was ready to make the trip; and there was another scene of embarrassing gratitude.

"I send-a da telegram to take Rolfieri on Sunday night," was the essence of Mr. Naccaro's share in the conversation; but his blessings upon the Saint, the bones of his ancestors, and the heads of his unborn descendants for generations, took up much more time.

Simon had to admit, however, that the practical contribution of the Naccaro clan was performed with an efficiency which he himself could scarcely have improved upon. He stood beside the museum Avro on the aerodrome of San Remo at dusk on the Sunday evening, and watched the kidnapping cortége coming towards him across the field with genuine admiration. The principal character was an apparently mummified figure rolled in blankets, which occupied an invalid chair wheeled by the unfortunate Maria in the uniform of a nurse. Her pale lovely face was set in an expression of beatific solicitude at which Simon, having some idea of the fate which awaited Signor Rolfieri in England, could have hooted aloud. Beside the invalid chair stalked a sedate spectacled man whose rôle was obviously that of the devoted physician. The airport officials, who had already checked the papers of pilot and passengers, lounged boredly in the far background, without a single disturbing suspicion of the classic getaway that was being pulled off under their noses.

Between them, Simon and the "doctor" tenderly lifted the mummified figure into the machine.

"He will not wake before you arrive, *signor*," whispered the man confidently, stooping to arrange the blankets affectionately round the body of his patient.

The Saint grinned gently, and stepped back to help the "nurse" into her place. He had no idea how the first stage of the abduction had been carried out, and he was not moved to inquire. He had performed similar feats himself, no less slickly, without losing the power to stand back and impersonally admire the technique of others in the same field. With a sigh of satisfaction he swung himself up into his own cockpit, signalled to the mechanic who stood waiting by the propeller of the warmed-up engine, and sent the ship roaring into the wind through the deepening dusk.

The flight north was consistently uneventful. With a south wind following to help him on, he sighted the three red lights which marked his fuelling station at about half-past two, and landed by the three flares that were kindled for him when he blinked his navigating lights. The two men procured from somewhere by Mr. Naccaro replenished his tank while he smoked a cigarette and stretched his legs, and in twenty minutes he was off again. He passed over Folkestone in the early daylight, and hedge-hopped for some miles before he reached his destination so that no inquisitive yokel should see exactly where he landed.

"You have him?" asked Mr. Naccaro, dancing about deliriously as Simon climbed stiffly down.

"I have," said the Saint. "You'd better get him inside quickly—I'm afraid your pals didn't dope him up as well as they thought they had, and from the way he was behaving just now I shouldn't be surprised if he was going to have-a da baby, too."

He stripped off his helmet and goggles, and watched the unloading of his cargo with interest. Signor Giuseppe Rolfieri had recovered considerably from the effects of the drug under whose influence he had been embarked; but the hangover, combined with some bumpy weather on the last part of the journey, restrained him hardly less effectively from much resistance. Simon had never known before that the human skin could really turn green; but the epidermis of Signor Rolfieri had literally achieved that remarkable tint.

The Saint stayed behind to help the other half of the reception committee—introduced as Mr. Naccaro's brother—wheel the faithful Avro into the shelter of a barn; and then he strolled back to the farmhouse. As he reached it the door opened, and Naccaro appeared.

"Ha!" he cried, clasping the Saint's shoulders. "Meester Templar —you have already been-a so kind

—I cannot ask it—but you have-a da car—will you go out again?"

Simon raised his eyebrows.

"Can't I watch the wedding?" he protested. "I might be able to help."

"Afterwards, yes," said Naccaro. "But we are not-a ready. *Ecco*, we are so hurry, so excited, when we come here we forget-a da mos' important tings. We forget-a da soap!"

Simon blinked.

"Soap?" he repeated. "Can't you marry him off without washing him?"

"No, no, no!" spluttered Naccaro. "You don't understand. Da soap, she is not-a to wash. She is to persuade. I show you myself, afterwards. It is my own idea. But-a da soap we mus' have. You will go, please, please, *signor*, in your car?"

The Saint frowned at him blankly for a moment; and then he shrugged.

"Okay, brother," he murmured. "I'd do more than that to find out how you persuade a bloke to get married with a cake of soap."

He stuffed his helmet and goggles into the pocket of his flying coat, and went around to the barn where he had parked his car before he took off for San Remo. He had heard of several strange intruments of persuasion in his time, but it was the first time he had ever met common or household soap in the guise of an implement of torture or moral coercion. He wondered whether the clan Naccaro had such a prejudiced opinion of Rolfieri's personal cleanliness that they thought the mere threat of washing him would terrify him into meeting his just obligations, or whether the victim was first smeared with ink and then bribed with the soap, or whether he was made to eat it; and he was so fascinated by these provocative speculations that he had driven nearly half a mile before he remembered that he was not provided with the wherewithal to buy it.

Simon Templar was not stingy. He would have bought any necessitous person a cake of soap, any day. In return for a solution of the mystery which was perplexing him at that moment, he would cheerfully have stood Mr. Naccaro a whole truckload of it. But the money was not in his pocket. In a moment of absent-mindedness he had set out on his trip with a very small allowance of ready cash; and all he had left of it then was two Italian lire, the change out of the last meal he had enjoyed in San Remo.

He stopped the car and scowled thoughtfully for a second. There was no place visible ahead where he could turn it, and he had no natural desire to back half a mile

down that narrow lane; but the road had led him consistently to the left since he set out, and he stood up to survey the landscape in the hope that the farmhouse might only lie a short distance across the fields as the crow flies or he could walk. And it was by doing this that he saw a curious sight.

Another car, of whose existence nobody had said anything, stood in front of the farmhouse; and into it Mr. Naccaro and his brother were hastily loading the body of the unfortunate Signor Rolfieri, now trussed with several fathoms of rope like an escape artist before demonstrating his art. The girl Maria stood by; and as soon as Rolfieri was in the car she followed him in, covered him with a rug, and settled herself comfortably on the seat. Naccaro and his brother jumped into the front, and the car drove rapidly away in the opposite direction to that which the Saint had been told to take.

Simon Templar sank slowly back behind the wheel and took out his cigarette-case. He deliberately paused to tap out a cigarette, light it, and draw the first two puffs as if he had an hour to spare; and then he pushed the gear lever into reverse and sent the great cream and red Hirondel racing back up the lane at a speed which gave no indication that he had ever hesitated to perform the manœuvre.

He turned the car around in the farmhouse gates and went on with the cut-out closed and his keen eyes vigilantly scanning the panorama ahead. The other car was a sedan, and half the time he was able to keep the roof in sight over the low hedges which hid the open Hirondel from its quarry. But it is doubtful whether the possibility of pursuit ever entered the heads of the party in front, who must have been firm in their belief that the Saint was at that moment speeding innocently towards the village to which they had directed him. Once, at a fork, he lost them; and then he spotted a tiny curl of smoke rising from the grass bank a little way up one turning, and drove slowly up to it. It was the lighted stub of a cigar which could not have been thrown out at any place more convenient for a landmark, and the Saint smiled and went on.

In a few seconds he had picked up the sedan again; and very shortly afterwards he jammed on his brakes and brought the Hirondel to a sudden halt.

The car in front had stopped before a lonely cottage whose thatched roof was clearly visible. In a flash the Saint was out of his own seat and walking silently up the lane

towards it. When the next turn would have brought him within sight of the car, he slipped through a gap in the hedge and sprinted for the back of the house. In broad daylight, there was no chance of further concealment; and it was neck or nothing at that point. But his luck held; and so far as he could tell he gained the lee of his objective unobserved. And once there, an invitingly open kitchen window was merely another link in the chain of chance which had stayed with him so benevolently throughout that adventure.

Rolfieri and the Naccaro team were already inside. He could hear the muffled mutter of their voices as he tiptoed down the dark passage towards the front of the house; and presently he stood outside the door of the room where they were. Through the keyhole he was able to take in the scene. Rolfieri, still safely trussed, was sitting in a chair, and the Naccaro brothers were standing over him. The girl Maria was curled up on the settee, smoking a cigarette and displaying a remarkable length of stocking for a betrayed virgin whose honour was at stake. The conversation was in Italian, which was only one language out of the Saint's comprehensive repertoire; and it was illuminating.

"You cannot make me pay," Rolfieri was saying; but his stubbornness could have been more convincing.

"That is true," Naccaro agreed. "I can only point out the disadvantages of not paying. You are in England, where the police would be very glad to see you. Your confederates have already been tried and sentenced, and it would be a mere formality for you to join them. The lightest sentence that any of them received was five years, and they could hardly give you less. If we left you here, and informed the police where to find you, it would not be long before you were in prison yourself. Surley twenty-five thousand pounds is a very small price to pay to avoid that."

Rolfieri stared sullenly at the floor for a while; and then he said: "I will give you ten thousand."

"It will be twenty-five thousand or nothing," said Naccaro. "Come, now—I see you are prepared to be reasonable. Let us have what we ask, and you will be able to leave England again before dark. We will tell that fool Templar that you agreed to our terms without the persuasion of the soap, and that we hurried you to the church before you changed your mind. He will fly you back to San Remo and you will have nothing more to fear."

"I have nothing to fear now," said Rolfieri, as if he was trying to hearten himself. "It would do you no good to hand me over to the police."

"It would punish you for wasting so much of our time and some of our money," put in the girl, in a tone which left no room for doubt that that revenge would be taken in the last resort.

Rolfieri licked his lips and squirmed in the tight ropes which bound him—he was a fat man, and they had a lot to bind. Perhaps the glimpse of his well-fed corporation which that movement gave him made him realise some of the inescapable discomforts of penal servitude to the amateur of good living, for his voice was even more half-hearted when he spoke again.

"I have not so much money in England," he said.

"You have a lot more than that in England," answered the other Naccaro harshly. "It is deposited in the City and Continental Bank under the name of Pierre Fontanne; and we have a cheque on that bank made out ready for you. All we require is your signature and a letter in your own hand instructing the bank to pay cash. Be quick and make up your mind, now—we are losing patience."

It was inevitable that there should be further argument on the subject, but the outcome was a foregone conclusion.

The cheque was signed and the letter was written; and Domenick Naccaro handed them over to his brother.

"Now you will let me go," said Rolfieri.

"We will let you go when Alessandro returns with the money," said Domenick Naccaro. "Until then, you stay here. Maria will look after you while I go back to the farm and detain Templar."

The Saint did not need to hear any more. He went back to the kitchen with soundless speed, and let himself out of the window by which he had entered. But before he left he picked up a trophy from a shelf over the sink.

Domenick Naccaro reached the farmhouse shortly after him, and found the Saint reading a newspaper.

"Rolfieri has-a marry Maria," he announced triumphantly, and kissed the Saint on both cheeks. "So after all I keep-a da secret of my leedle trick wis-a da soap. But everyting we owe to you, my friend!"

"I guess you do," Simon admitted. "Where are the happy couple?"

"Ha! That is-a da romance. It

seems that Signor Rolfieri was always fond of Maria, and when he hear that she have-a da baby, and he see her again—*presto!* he is in love wis her. So now they go to London to get-a da clothes, queeck, so she can go wis him for da honeymoon. So I tink we drink-a da Antinori wine till they come back."

They spent a convivial morning, which Simon Templar would have enjoyed more if caution had not compelled him to tip most of his drinks down the back of his chair.

It was half-past one when a car drew up outside, and a somewhat haggard Rolfieri, a jubilant Alessandro Naccaro, and a quietly smiling Maria came in. Domenick jumped up.

"Everything is all right?" he asked.

"Pairfect," beamed Alessandro.

That was as much as the Saint was waiting to hear. He uncoiled himself from his chair and smiled at them all.

"In that case, boys and girls," he drawled, "would you all put up your hands and keep very quiet?"

There was an automatic in his hand; and six eyes stared at it mutely. And then Domenick Naccaro smiled a wavering and watery smile.

"I tink you make-a da joke, no?" he said.

"Sure," murmured the Saint amiably. "I make-a da joke. Just try to get obstreperous, and watch me laugh."

He brought the glowering Alessandro towards him and searched his pockets. There was no real question of anybody getting obstreperous, but the temptation to do so must have been very near when he brought out a sheaf of new banknotes and transferred them one-handed to his own wallet.

"This must seem rather hard-hearted of me," Simon remarked, "but I have to do it. You're a very talented family—if you really are a family—and you must console yourselves with the thought that you fooled me for a whole ten days. When I think how easily you might have fooled me for the rest of the way, it sends cold shivers up and down my spine. Really boys, it was a rather brilliant scheme, and I wish I'd thought of it myself."

"You wait till I see you da next time, you pig," said Domenick churlishly.

"I'll wait," Simon promised him.

He backed discreetly out of the room and out of the house to his car; and they clustered in the doorway to watch him. It was not until he pressed the starter that the fullest realisation dawned upon Signor Rolfieri.

"But what happens to me?" he screamed. "How do I go back to San Remo?"

"I really don't know, Comrade," answered the Saint callously. "Perhaps Domenick will help you again if you give him some more money. Twenty five thousand quid instead of five years' penal servitude was rather a bargain price, anyway."

He let in the clutch gently, and the big car moved forward. But in a yard or two he stopped it again, and felt in one of his pockets. He brought out his souvenir of a certain fortunate kitchen, and tossed it to the empurpled Domenick.

"Sorry, brother," he called back over his shoulder. "I forget-a da soap!"

NEXT MONTH—

FRAMED IN OIL by LAWRENCE TREAT

SMILER BUNN'S DREAM BULLET by PHILIP ATKEY

WE WERE PICKED AS THE ODD ONES
by WADE MILLER

INFERNAL TRIANGLE by LEE CHAYTOR

and

THE SAINT
and
THE MAN WHO LIKED ANTS

by LESLIE CHARTERIS

— in THE SAINT MYSTERY MAGAZINE

CROSS-TRAILS

by LEWIS KILPATRICK

Sheriff Clint Hawkins hated to shoot the boy. His blue eyes, keen above a blond mustache, would rather smile than sight a gun and his thick girth was evidence of friendly living among the Kentucky hills. But young Randy Wilkerson had refused to surrender. He openly dared a bullet from Clint's 30.30 Winchester. Only the lashing November storm and the sheriff's injured horse kept him from following up the shot with a prisoner between the handcuffs clamped to his holstered belt.

"I aimed just at his legs," he muttered, dismounting to the muddy trail. "But this cold rain may have caused me to hit some other part of him. He staggered back down from that cliff—

"Whoa, Journey! Let me look at that forehoof."

It was a sharp piece of limestone which finally made him throw the rifle to his shoulder, after his horse stumbled, and fire at Randy. A boy of eighteen, while armed with a revolver, had a safer weapon in a rock. A .38 bullet would be more incriminating before a court than a half-pound stone, flung to halt a pursuer without killing him.

Keeping the bay horse between him and the cliff, Sheriff Hawkins hunkered down in his mackinaw

and examined the injured fetlock. The wound cut through the hairy flesh to the bone. He took out his bandana, soaked it in a puddle beside the road, washed the gash and wrapped it tightly with the handkerchief. He did not remount.

"The only house for miles is the old log cabin up Pollard Fork. We'll make for it, Journey," he said, leading the limping animal by the bridle. "But that Randy can't get far. I'll start rounding him up after I find shelter for you."

He no longer feared a bullet from Randy's stolen .38 special. The boy, reckless as he was, wanted most to get away. Any corn liquor in him must have been sweated out during the flight from his mother's home through the hollows and over the timbered ridges.

Graying, comely Liza Wilkerson wept bitterly when the sheriff rode to her door:

"Clint, I've done my best to rear him proper since his pa was chased away. But a lone woman ain't no match for a wild growing boy. Randy'll go to school a spell, then take off into mischief. He comes home, behaves himself and works hard on the farm. But a-venturing he'll go again. He took to the brush when he seen you coming. I—I reckon there's just too much Trumbo Wilkerson in him."

Clint tried to comfort her:

"Don't you worry, Liza. I'll be as gentle with him as he'll let me. But I'm bound this time to fetch him in. Yes, I'm mindful of Trumbo, too."

Years before, when he courted her as pretty Liza Pollard, she chose swashbuckling Trumbo Wilkerson instead of him. Trumbo, more interested in moonshining than in farming, finally had his still raided by the Federals. Clint was a deputy then—and he and the sheriff went along reluctantly with the marshals. Trumbo's partners were captured, but he escaped in the darkness up Pollard Fork under a spattering of Federal bullets. The officers didn't bother to search further for him. He never was seen in those parts again.

Clint recalled that raid, ten years before, as he led his horse along the miry trails. He'd never regretted marrying his Betty, but his heart always had a soft feeling for Liza. That was why, as high sheriff, he'd let her boy get away with a lot of devilment.

With rain dripping from his slouch hat and mackinaw, he ruminated:

"I should have arrested that Randy when he tied those cats' tails together and flung 'em through the church window during a meeting. Or maybe a night in jail would 'a'

cured him the first time he got drunk in town. I still hold—but nobody could prove it—it was him who stuffed the school house chimney full of wet leaves last fall and smoked everybody out.

"But when he fought with Omer Suddith yesterday over little Nettie White, grabbed Omer's pistol and shot three shoots at him— Well, that ended my patience. Now he's crippled my horse. It's a pity Kaintucky ever outlawed the whipping post!"

Clint paused now and then to let Journey rest and nibble grass along the trail. The abandoned Pollard cabin, where he courted Liza in their late teens, was up the valley behind the cliff from which Randy threw the rock. The village county seat was some twelve miles away. But if he stabled Journey in the cabin, Clint figured, he could tramp to the nearest inhabited home by early nightfall. There he'd borrow a sound horse, return to the court house and plot new strategy for Randy's capture.

"That means swearing in a posse and searching all this part of Crag County. He won't venture back home, even wounded, for he knows that's the first place I'll look for him. He's a smart boy, tall and fair and freckle-faced, and he learns fast when he does go to school.

"But," Clint almost apologized to himself, "I've just got to stop him. He'll get into far worse trouble if I don't. Could end in the electric chair. Poor Liza! She was a happy, sightly gal. I hate to think of her young'un maybe lying sore hurt out in this storm. But Trumbo—"

The yard of the Pollard cabin, behind a rotted wormrail fence, had long ago grown up in weeds. The sagging porch made a ramp up which he led his horse to the gaping front door. There wasn't a whole pane of glass left in any of the few windows. The clapboard roof, its shingles mossy and warped, now covered only part of the loft.

Journey balked at the door, tossing his head, but Clint pulled him inside. He barely glanced toward the ladder leading from the main room to the loft. His memory brooded for a moment on the empty rock fireplace before which he and Liza had sat, holding hands, many a winter night.

He leaned his Winchester against the wall and ungirthed the saddle. Taking the blanket, dry where the saddle had covered it, he rubbed Journey from head to hoofs. Darkness was closing in, the rain giving way to a wind which growled through the shattered windows and rattled the clapboards on the roof.

"I'll have to leave you here for a

spell." Clint patted the bay's neck. "But I'll—" He felt something wet drop on the back of his hand. "What's that?"

It wasn't rain from the leaky roof, he knew instantly. He replaced his hand where it had been. Another drop, warm. His keen eyes searched the raftered ceiling. Then he held his hand under his nose and sniffed. Well did he know that smell! He tasted the dark splotches with the tip of his tongue. *Salty.*

He stepped quickly to the wall where he'd propped his rifle. He picked it up, finger on the trigger.

"Randy! Randy Wilkerson—? Don't you dare shoot through that floor! Throw your pistol down the ladder! Follow it yourself!"

Journey gave a nervous snort. The wind whined between the unchinked log walls and snarled down the empty chimney. There was no human sound but Clint's thick breathing.

"Randy, I know it's you up there. You can't get away. Don't let yourself bleed to death," he begged, softening his tone. "Come down unarmed and I'll doctor you the best I can. I'll get you to a neighbor and on to Doc Hardin somehow. Randy, son—"

The horse, apparently scenting the blood dripping on his neck, snorted again and backed to the further side of the room. Clint studied the ladder. He now saw fresh mud on the rungs. He'd climbed them several times, years ago, to take the night on a pallet. Once he and Trumbo slept up there together when trapped by a blizzard.

But he was not climbing that ladder now. The instant his hat appeared above the top rung, he'd have a bullet in his head. He imagined Randy, lying or crouching in the shadows, a young animal crazed by pain and fear, desperate and now ready to kill. Poor Liza!

Clint, his back to the wall, tried again:

"Randy, your crime ain't very serious. You just shot three shots at Omer Suddith. You didn't hit him. He and his folks ain't too mad. Son, Judge Combs will let you off light for a first offense. Likely you won't be sent to jail a-tall. I'll ask the judge to bind you over to me. Randy, I'll let you work out your fine around my barn and wood-pile. I'll—"

A groan shivered above the whining, growling wind. Clint impulsively started toward the ladder. Then he stepped back. He knew too much of Kentucky mountaineers to be lured by sympathy into death.

He remembered an old apple tree at the back of the cabin. Some of its limbs overhung the roof. He

slipped out the door, around the house, keeping close to the walls, and stood under the tree. There was a large hole in the clapboards where a stout limb arched.

He took off his mackinaw, laid it and the Winchester at the base of the tree, and tightened his cartridge belt. His own .38 special was holstered there, the handcuffs at his hip. He always carried a waterproof box of matches.

The apple tree bark was slick and he climbed slowly, hand by hand, foothold by foothold. The wind rattling the clapboards would conceal any slight noise he made. He reached the edge of the roof and swung himself to the hole.

He paused, listening. He heard no sound from the loft. Randy must think him still in the room below.

His hat pushed back, the revolver in his right hand, he edged between the open roof beams. He detected no movement in the shadowy loft. Instead he saw two prone figures on the floor. They lay quite still, their feet toward him.

"*Randy!*" He pointed the .38.

Neither figure moved, but from the one at the left came a low moan. Clint grabbed the leg of the other man. The trouser cloth gave in his fingers and he gripped something hard beneath.

He gasped. A chill waved up his spine to the very top of his head. He holstered the revolver, fumbled for his matchbox and struck a light.

He saw young Randy Wilkerson, a dark stain on one hip of his jeans, breathing, slowly but evenly. The other man—? Clint struck a second match and bent over him.

There was no other man. Only rotted clothing shrouding a skeleton. But Clint remembered that form and those garments, last seen in a running gun battle with Federal marshals. Randy, from childhood recollections, must have recognized them too. He wasn't the first wounded Wilkerson to seek sanctuary in the loft of the old Pollard cabin.

"He petered out from fear as much as bleeding." Clint's fingertips examined the boy in the darkness. "Thank the Lord my bullet missed any bone and big blood vessel! He'll soon mend. Yes—seeing what happened to his pappy, he'll mend for good and all. Poor Liza sure has the right to be happy again."

POINT OF HONOR

by GEORGE FIELDING ELIOT

The minute I set eyes on this señorita standing there on the ramp at Torrejon de Ardoz, I knew she was bad news. For me, anyway. Nothing personal, of course, I never play girl-games when I'm on a job. I save that for later, when I've earned my fee and can take a few days off.

What I didn't like about this tall slender babe in white flying-clothes that did nothing to spoil the effect of Nature's gifts was the way Colonel Ellsworth was looking at her. Also the way she was looking at him.

Colonel Ellsworth was important to me right then. He was the boy who was putting my show—or rather my client's show—back on the road. He'd already demonstrated what he could do at two of the American air bases in Spain, and if he could do the same trick here at Torrejon de Ardoz, which is right next door to Madrid, my client would be in business again and I could send a cable to New York telling the big boss what bank to put my five grand in while I took a little vacation on the Riviera. There was a blonde at Cannes—but never mind her, this story is about a brunette.

"Excuse me a second, Carl," muttered Ellsworth.

"Hold it, Jim," I said. "Here's Walters."

Walters—big and hearty, hand out and teeth gleaming in the sun—was hurrying toward us. He was the Madrid representative of Mammoth Electric—my client. If he resented having a trouble-shooter like me sent over to Spain to do a job he hadn't been able to do, you'd never guess it to see the way he grabbed my hand and boomed words of welcome.

"Good to see you again, Carl, old man!" he proclaimed. "Hope you had a good flight? How'd things go at Sanjurjo?"

"The flight was fine," I told him, "and Jim Ellsworth's a miracle boy. The rest can wait till there aren't so many ears around."

A couple of Spanish security-control officers were coming our way—U. S. air bases in Spain are under Spanish command, and Spaniards are very jealous indeed of their national prestige.

I looked around for Jim Ellsworth. He was fifty feet away, busy feeding a fast line to the girl in the white flying outfit. She was eating it up, too—to judge from the wide-eyed attention she was giving him.

"Who's the babe?" I asked Walters. "Some local aviatrix?"

A line of worry bisected Walters' plump forehead.

"Not just that," he told me. "The lady is Doña Ines de Valderon, only daughter of the late Marqués de Valderon. She's taken up flying for kicks—as she does everything else. Her brother—"

"Save it," I interrupted, fishing out my credentials for the security lads. While they were saluting politely and pawing over the assorted documents which authenticated my presence in Spain, my right to travel in military aircraft and my special status as representative of an American prime contractor, I watched Ellsworth and the girl. They certainly were a well-matched pair—Ellsworth lean and bronzed in his sun-tan uniform, his cap tucked under his arm, his parachutist's badge agleam on his chest along with three rows of fruit salad, Doña Ines looking up at him very earnestly and almost eagerly, slim hands clasped just under the breasts that strained at the white silk of her fitted shirt. She smiled suddenly and I felt the impact all the way over where I was standing.

"All in order, Señor Fraser," one of the control officers was saying. "But you had a companion, no?"

"Lieutenant Colonel Ellsworth flew down with me from Sanjurjo," I said. "Hi, Jim—come show your papers."

Ellsworth threw me an annoyed glance, said something fast and urgent to the girl. She nodded, smiled again and gave him a hand over which he bowed as gracefully as though he'd been born to the manner. She turned and walked quickly away as Jim came striding toward Walters and me and the Spanish officers, hauling out a brown-leather wallet. The two Spaniards stared after her, looked at each other and then looked both together at Jim. It was not a loving glance, and I knew why. If there is one thing more than another that Spaniards don't like in Americans, it's playing around with their señoritas. Especially high-born senñoritas such as Doña Ines de Valderon. If Doña Ines decided to take up having fun and games with Jim Ellsworth for kicks, there was going to be blood on the Castilian moon. Maybe his.

The security officers were extra polite, going over Jim's papers, and saluted him with a flourish as they handed them back. They hated his guts.

"Car's over there by the tower," said Walters.

"Okay, let's get going," I urged.

We didn't talk much on the way to Walters' office because his driver understood English and probably knew a little cantina where a little man hung around who'd hand out little bundles of pesetas for little scraps of useful information. I spent the time thinking about Jim Ellsworth. Also about what might happen if he got into any girl-trouble that would cancel out his usefulness to me—a usefulness which was founded on his wonderful gift for winning the confidence and respect of the Spaniards, especially Army and Air Force officers.

Right here I'd better tell you about the Pundonor business. Pundonor means point of honor in Spanish, and the fact that they run it all together in one word might suggest how much store they set by such things. You never know when you're going to run into pundonor in Spain. When my client suddenly found it imperilling a multi-million-dollar contract, it sure came as a big surprise. What had happened was, the Pentagon had talked the Spanish brass into organizing a special guard force for the American bases —ten thousand Spanish officers and men, to be toughened up by special training under U. S. Army ranger and paratroop instructors. This outfit was to be divided up among the three air bases and the naval base at Rota, and to have its own airlift and a special alarm and communications system, with maximum security against sabotage. Mammoth Electric, my client, was the top

contractor for this system.

Everything was going along just fine when the Pundonor trouble started. All of a sudden, a lot of the young officers who'd volunteered for the new outfit got the idea that the military honor of the Spanish officer corps was being aspersed by requiring them to take special training from Americans before they could be trusted to guard bases in Spain under the Spanish flag. They started a society called Pundonor to give expression to this feeling. They started fighting duels with officers who didn't agree with them, too. The Spanish general staff began getting nervous, and hinting maybe it might be better just to let the whole project fade away.

So Mammoth Electric got to worrying about their fat contract, and did what comes naturally to a U. S. foreign-aid contractor in a jam—they sent for me, Carlisle Fraser, trouble-shooter extraordinary. I said I'd go take a look for two-and-a-half grand and expenses, with double pay if I pulled them out of the mess. They hemmed and hawed, but they really had no choice —there's only one Carl Fraser. So they said Okay, and could I catch the next plane for Madrid. I told 'em I'd get to Madrid in due time and went to Washington to make some contacts in the Pentagon. What I needed was the low-down, not just the story as Mammoth had it from their Madrid representative Walters. It's been my experience that when something suddenly goes wrong to block a U. S. aid project, military of otherwise, it's not likely to be something that just happened from natural causes as brother Walters seemed to think.

So that's how I found out about Jim Ellsworth, through a general saying sort of sadly that it was too bad Ellsworth was out in Kentucky commanding an airborne infantry battle-group, because when he'd been in Spain for a year at the start of the base construction program, he'd been the one man who always knew just how to handle the Spaniards. Seems his mother had been Spanish, he'd learned the language from childhood and spoke it like a native, he could even think like a Spaniard. The general started to tell me about all the miraculous smooth-outs he'd finagled and I said the general was wasting time, get this miracle boy out of Kentucky and ship him to Spain, pronto, to take charge of this new training program. Preferably on the same plane with me, so we could have a little talk. The general said why hadn't he thought of that sooner and started pushing buttons. That's how Jim Ellsworth and I

found ourselves in Spain together, and I mean together, because we hit it off right from the start. I had a backlog of experience in snafus like this one which was useful to Jim, and boy, was he useful to me. When we ran into the señorita that afternoon at Torrejon de Ardoz, we'd already been to two other bases, one on the south at Moron de la Frontera and the other up north at Sanjurjo-Valenzuela. Both times, Jim had talked with a few local Pundonor members, then got the whole bunch of officers of the new guard force together in the officers' club and resold 'em on the training program as its new commander. When he got through, both times, he had 'em cheering. Anything that was going to be commanded by "Don Jaime" was okay with them. It took him hours to get away from the *embrazos* and the accompanying refreshments. I thought I could handle alcoholic stimulants, but Jim Ellsworth put me to shame—he walked away from those two sessions just as clear-voiced and steady as when he arrived.

So now we came to Torrejon de Ardoz and the biggest job of all, the one that really counted, because the headquarters of the guard force was at Torrejon, and about three times as many officers as at the other two bases put together. Also Madrid was the place the Pundonor movement had started. We'd had our tryouts, and they'd gone just fine. But if we failed here, we'd still be out of luck.

You see why I figured this Doña Ines as bad news? Because she hadn't turned up just by chance, either; not for my dough. Somebody who didn't like U. S. air bases in Spain or anywhere else in Europe ahd stirred up this Pundonor schemozzle, and now that Jim Ellsworth was cooling off Pundonor, something had to be done about Jim Ellsworth. So now we had Doña Ines in the picture all of a sudden.

The minute the door of Walters' office had closed on the three of us, I said:

"Jim, am I wrong to think you knew that young lady from when you were in Spain before?"

"So what?" snapped Jim.

So it hadn't been a fast pick-up. And whoever was responsible for Doña Ines being so handy when we deplaned at Torrejon knew she meant something to Jim.

Walters tossed his Panama on the table and mopped sweat from his plump pink face.

"I suppose you realize her brother's the spark-plug of the Pundonor outfit," he rumbled.

Oh-oh, I thought.

"All the better," said Jim, grinning.

"All the better, hell," Walters retorted. "That kid's the Marqués de Valderon since their father died last year. You know about the Valderons? They're grandees of the first class—the kind that keep their hats on both when they're talking to the king and when he's talking to them. Or would if there was a king, which there will be again some day. Young Diego thinks being Marqués de Valderon is just about as good as being king anyway. So you better lay off his sister, Colonel."

Which wasn't the way to talk to Jim Ellsworth.

Jim just sort of grunted and said he'd think about it. I knew he meant to do more than think about it, but I'd have to be careful how I tried to offer any prudent suggestions after Walters' stupid crack.

Nothing much happened for two or three days after that. Jim and I talked with a few of the Pundonor crowd; they were polite enough and Jim thought he was making a little headway. I didn't. He wasn't getting through to them as he had at the other two places. I asked him once if he'd tried to see the young Marqués de Valderon, who was a captain in the Principe de Asturias regiment of infantry and had been an early volunteer for the air-base guard detail.

"Not yet, he'll keep," was all Jim answered. But he disappeared every now and then for a couple of hours, early morning or late afternoon, So I knew he wasn't neglecting the Valderon family altogether. Of course an American officer—or any other American male—doesn't take a high-born Spanish señorita out on date in public. Not alone, anyway, and not at all till he'd been received by the family and well looked over. If American boy meets Spanish girl for a twosome, it has to be done very discreetly and carefully. Unless the girl is a tramp or wants to be known as one.

The third night after we arrived in Madrid, Jim and I were sitting in one of Madrid's quieter nightspots having a couple of drinks and talking over the prospects. There were quite a few Spanish officers at some of the other tables, and every now and then I'd catch a quick glance tossed toward Jim: they seemed to know who he was, though he had on civilian whites with nothing to mark him as an American officer except the little rosette of the DSC in his lapel. I wasn't happy. I had a feeling the whole show was about to blow up under our feet, and there went my

two-and-a-half grand bonus. To say nothing of more trouble for Uncle Sam. I cared about that too, believe it or not.

There was a queer tension in the place. I have a sensitive nervous system; it reacts to tension, especially when there's worse to follow. Which there was tonight, or my built-in alarm system was telling me lies.

"I'm going to call it an evening, Jim," I said as carelessly as I could.

"It's early yet," Jim protested. "One more for a nightcap, eh?"

Before I could object, here came this slim young officer in light blue and silver, weaving his way between the tables, heading for us. The buzz of talk in the big room died away. Fifty pairs of eyes were following the young man as he came toward us.

He didn't seem to notice all the attention. His dark eyes were fixed on Jim Ellsworth, and there was a glitter in those eyes I didn't care for. I knew who he was at first glance; nobody who had ever seen the sister could have mistaken the brother.

"Señor Teniente Coronel Ellsworth?" he inquired, with a very slight bow.

Jim got up from his chair, not too quickly. So did I. I felt like a runt —I'm a little fellow, just five feet seven, and these were both six-footers.

"My name's Ellsworth," Jim agreed pleasantly.

"Permit me to introduce myself," said the newcomer. "Captain the Marqués de Valderon."

"Enchanted," smiled Jim. "May I present my friend Señor Fraser? And will you be seated and join us in a glass?

"I did not come here for that purpose," snapped the Marqués, ignoring me as though I weren't there. "I came to desire you to cease your unwelcome attentions to a lady of my family."

"Unwelcome?" murmured Jim.

"Precisely," said the Marqués. "And insulting to the family honor."

Jim was getting a little pink around the gills.

"This is hardly the place for such a discussion, señor," he grated.

"I can hardly demean myself by calling at your hotel," retorted the Marqués. "I learned that you were here and welcomed the opportunity. Let all Madrid hear me forbid you to again presume to communicate in any way with my sister Doña Ines."

"When she tells me that herself," agreed Jim.

"She will have no opportunity to

do so," rasped the Marqués. "As the head of the family, I have laid my commands upon her. It remains only that you understand my resolve to put an end to this shameful association."

"And if I don't see it quite that way?" Jim asked softly.

The Marqués' hand moved like a flash, smacking Jim across the face with the gloves he was carrying.

The next instant the Marqués was picking himself up from the wreckage of a spindle-legged chair a yard away. Jim's hand had moved even faster than his—not with gloves but with a bunch of knuckles.

That's torn it, I thought. Goodbye bonus.

Right on top of that came another thought—somebody planned it this way, and it wasn't this hot-headed young idiot of a Marqués.

The hot-headed young idiot was on his feet again, teeth agleam in a smile that was sheer ferocity.

Three or four other officers were on their feet too, and they weren't smiling. They crowded up behind the Marqués all set to have Jim's blood then and there. The Marqués waved them back.

"You will, of course, afford me satisfaction for that blow, Colonel Ellsworth?" he purred. "Captain Urquiza here will be glad, I am sure, to call upon any friend you may name to make suitable arrangements."

A dark-faced artillery officer bowed and said he would be honored beyond his poor deserts. They all looked at Ellsworth and waited.

Jim spoke slowly, fighting to get a grip on his own temper.

"You'll be aware, of course, señor Marqués, that an American officer who fights a duel will inevitably be dismissed from the service in disgrace?"

"Ah!" smiled the Marqués. "A coward, as I thought. I have never believed that American officers earned such gewgaws as you wear on your coat by any true deeds of valor, of which they are incapable."

"Take it easy, Jim," I muttered, getting ready to make a grab for that right hand if I saw it start to move again.

Jim didn't appear to hear me.

"I will not engage in any formalities with Captain Urquiza, nor will I fight a duel with you, señor Marqués," he said, still picking his words carefully. "But since you have called my personal courage into question, I suggest that you meet me tomorrow morning at 0700 hours in front of Hangar Nine at Torrejon de Ardoz. I will there afford you an opportunity to demonstrate how favorably your own

courage compares with mine. You may, of course, bring with you Captain Urquiza or any other witness you may choose."

"Bah!" snarled the Marqués. "An evasion—a Yanqui trick!"

"I have made my suggestion," said Jim Ellsworth evenly. "It is for you to accept or reject my proposal. Naturally if you feel unequal to such a test—"

"I shall be there!" interrupted the Marqués, eyes ablaze. "But if this proves to be a trick, I shall have a cane with me to punish you suitably."

He turned and marched out of the café, Urquiza and several others trailing after him.

"What the hell—" I began.

"We can't talk here," Jim cut in. "I'll tell you what I have in mind when we're outside."

He did just that, and as I listened to him while we walked the few short blocks to the hotel, I can tell you I felt the hairs beginning to stand up on the back of my neck.

"Are you nuts?" I demanded when he'd finished. "You can't go through with a crazy deal like this, Jim. You better let me get you on a plane for the States tonight and forget the whole lousy business."

He shook his head.

"Running away won't help, Carl," he said. "That would just leave the whole Spanish officer corps sneering at America guts. We'd never get on with 'em after that. I shouldn't've hit him, but I did, and I've got to face up to the consequences in my own way. I can't think of any better way than the one I've decided on."

"Decided, hell," I told him. "It was the first silly idea that came into your head."

I kept on arguing—but it was like arguing with a stone wall. He'd made up his mind.

"It's my fault," he insisted. "We wouldn't be in this bind if I'd just had the strength of mind to stay away from Doña Ines. Without that to stir up her brother's Castilian pride, I could've brought him around like I did the others. Probably there's no good way out of the mess now, but I can't just cut and run."

"You've been carrying a torch for Doña Ines ever since you left Spain four years ago, haven't you, Jim?" I asked.

He nodded—we were in my hotel room by that time, and Jim was pacing the floor which I sprawled miserably in an arm chair.

"That's right," he agreed. "That's why I grabbed at the chance to come back here—even though I knew it wouldn't do any good. I'd even promised myself I wouldn't try

to see her—and then there she was at Torrejon and all the good resolutions just melted."

After a minute he said in a different tone:

"I have a date with her early tomorrow morning, Jim. I won't be able to keep it, and I can't telephone her at this hour. I hope she'll understand."

A ray of sudden hope flickered in my mind. Very off-handedly I said:

"Early morning's a funny time to have a date, isn't it?"

"You do what you can in Spain," Jim answered. "Doña Ines goes to early mass every day at the Church of Nuestra Señora de Gracia. She has a companion with her, of course, but the old lady does as she's told. All that hardly matters now, though. I'll be going along to my own room and telephone the base to make the arrangements. See you later."

The door had hardly closed behind him when the phone rang.

It was Walters.

"Where's Ellsworth?" he demanded.

"On the way to his room," I told him. "Try him there."

"Not yet. I want to talk to you first. What's this nonsense I hear about a duel between him and young de Valderon?"

Walters was a gabby guy. Anyway I'm naturally cautious, so I said:

"Jim's a commissioned officer of the United States Army, remember? Did you ever read what the Uniform Code of Military Justice says about officers fighting duels?"

"Don't stall me, Fraser!" There was an edge in Walters' voice now. "I've just sent a cable to my New York office reporting good progress, and if it all blows up—Look Fraser, you're working for Mammoth and I've got a right to know the facts!"

I had to cool him off or he'd be running all over Madrid asking questions—maybe of some of Jim's superior officers, which would be just too bad.

"Take it easy, Walters," I advised. "Let me handle this, will you? I know what I'm doing."

"Then there *is* going to be a duel!" squalled Walters.

"Dammit, no! And stop chattering about it on the 'phone," I snarled. "Even in English, that isn't safe."

"You're lying!" cried Walters. "You've got to tell me."

"Let everything go for tonight, can't you?" I asked. "We'll have breakfast together tomorrow and I'll tell you what I know. Meet me at eight A.M. at my hotel."

"No soap!" snapped Walters. "I have to know—Oh, maybe I'm being

unreasonable. You're sure nothing will happen before then?"

"I'll see to that personally, and I know just how I'm going to go about it," I answered—with a lot more confidence than I really felt.

"Okay then," said Walters in his normal hearty tone. "I'll leave it to you old man. 'Night.

Something bothered me about this quick-change act. Walters had clearly heard something about what had happened at the café. Maybe by chance—but he'd heard pretty quickly for just happen-so. Maybe he was playing smart and had somebody trailing Jim and me. Anyway he hadn't any details of time or place. What he wanted from me was summed up in his two sharp questions: "Where? When?" To which I added one of my own: "Why?" Why did he demand that information so urgently and then give up so easily without getting it?

Oh, well, what of it? I had more pressing business to think about than Walters and his worries. I just hoped I'd calmed him down for tonight. I thumbed through my Madrid guide-book till I found the location of the Church of Nuestra Señora de Gracia. It was near the Plaza de Moros, in the old southwestern part of the city—hardly the place anybody would expect to find a fashionable young lady pursuing her devotions. Maybe that was why Doña Ines had picked it. She wouldn't be meeting anyone who knew her. I thought about Doña Ines for a minute or two. If I guessed wrong about that gal, I was out of luck. So was Jim. In a much bigger way than I was.

I was playing a hunch that she was really in love with Jim. The hunch was based on nothing more than the expression on her face that afternoon at Torrejon de Ardoz. No doubt somebody had tipped her off that Jim was due to arrive from Sanjurjo. Probably that somebody had meant to start trouble for Jim. But Doña Ines hadn't come there to make trouble for him. She'd come because she wanted to see him again. Anyway that was the way I was going to play it. I set my little traveling clock to sound off at 0500—there's no depending on Spanish hotel employes for punctual attention to early-morning calls—but before I lay down to catch a few winks, I went down the corridor to Jim's room to say good night—and to see if just maybe he might be cooling off on this insane idea of his.

He'd already called the base and made all the necessary arrangements. Nobody had asked any nosy questions. He was going out early to check the details.

"I'll meet you out there, then," I said unhappily. "Say about 0630 or 0645?"

"Fine," agreed Jim. "Get a good night's rest."

I said I would, which I doubted. But one of my necessary disciplines is to be able to get some sleep no matter what's worrying me, so when the clock went off, I was sleeping soundly enough.

As usual, there was a night-hawk taxi at the stand near the hotel, and the driver showed no surprise when I told him where I wanted to go. His surprise—and mine—came a little later when we were trundling along the Calle de Toledo in the gray morning light. A big car came racing up behind us, swung out to pass and then suddenly swerved as though it meant to jam the taxi against the high curb. I hit the floor just in time: the bullets that smacked through the glass would've been in my noodle if I hadn't. I poked up my head to see the car disappear around the next corner.

"Keep going," I said to the driver. "Let's get away from here before some cops show up."

He was too scared to do anything but what I told him. I was scared too.

It looked as though somebody who wanted this crazy affair to go on had figured out what I was up to, and was ready to try murder rather than let me succeed. Whoever it was must have been waiting outside the hotel, all set to give me the business. But how could anybody know what I intended to do—since I'd kept that information locked up tight in my own head? I wished I'd brought a gun, but I hadn't. I just had to hope that the gunman believed he'd hit me and wouldn't come back for another try. We rattled along. The street was empty of traffic.

"This is the Plaza de Moros, señor," my driver quavered presently. "The church is there, at the left."

I gave him a wad of paper money to keep him happy and told him to wait. He said he would. The church was open and a few people were going in; just beyond the church an old-fashioned high-bodied sedan stood against the curb.

I went up the steps and through the open door into the vast filtered twilight of the church. The candle-bordered altar seemed a mile away—the intonations of the Mass echoed from the vaulted roof as my eyes darted over the few kneeling figures I could just make out in the shadows between the stone pillars. I was looking for two women, heavily veiled—and I had to be careful. Addressing female worshippers one

doesn't know is not approved conduct for a foreigner in Spain. I figured they'd be near the door. And so they were. The white mantilla could not disguise the proud carriage of the head, the grace of movement of the pale hands that held the rosary—

I knelt beside her.

"Doña Ines," I said very softly.

She turned a startled face, and I told her who I was in a hurry before she could say anything to alarm her companion.

"I must speak with you, señorita," I said. "Colonel Ellsworth is in trouble."

She rose to her feet instantly and went out of the church without a question or a word of protest. The other woman followed, but kept her distance. On the sidewalk, Doña Ines swung around to face me.

"Tell me quickly, señor. You are his friend—I remember you at the air base, and he has spoken of you since. What is wrong?"

So I told her what was wrong in just as few words as I could pack the story into.

She heard me through with no feminine interruptions.

"They are mad, both of them," she said when I'd finished. "But it is a madness which must be dealt with. Will you take me to Torrejon de Ardoz now, Señor Fraser?"

Quite a girl, Doña Ines de Valderon.

"Of course," I answered. "I have a taxi—" I broke off in sudden panic. The taxi was gone; the driver had chickened out, for which I suppose he wasn't to be blamed.

She read the situation instantly.

"My car is here," she said, running over to it. With half-a-dozen crisp words she had the chauffeur standing bewildered on the sidewalk, her woman companion in the back seat and me behind the wheel. She settled beside me.

"Do you know the road? No? Then I'll direct you. We haven't too much time."

We hadn't—but we had just enough. I was too busy handling that unfamiliar old car amid the traffic—there was plenty of it on the main highway—to do a lot of talking, but I did get in one question that was bothering me:

"How did you know Colonel Ellsworth was arriving at Torrejon the other afternoon, Doña Ines?"

"A boy brought a note—unsigned—to tell me when his plane would arrive. He admitted when I saw him that he hadn't caused the note to be sent—I don't know who did." She shrugged. "What matter? It reached me just in time for me to change into flying clothes—as an excuse, if questions were

asked—and to get to the base before your plane landed."

I chewed that over the rest of the way to Torrejon. When I braked to a stop at the corner of Hangar Nine, a C-47 was warming up out on the approach ramp. Neither Ellsworth nor Diego de Valderon were in sight. A couple of Spanish airmen were fiddling around the plane.

"I think," said Doña Ines, "that if you were to drive up close to the plane—quickly before anyone else comes—I might get aboard without too much notice being taken."

"But—" I began.

"You wanted my help, I understood?" she cut in. "Then please do as I ask, and put the car out of sight beyond the hangar—my brother would recognize it—and find a pair of trousers and a shirt that might fit me. Please. There's no time to argue. Luisa, you stay in the car."

"Si, Doña Ines," said Luisa meekly.

So I stopped the car opposite the open door of the plane, and Doña Ines whipped up the steel ladder and disappeared inside so quickly that the airmen hardly had a glimpse of her. They stared a moment and went on about their business. I ran the car around back of the hangar, went in and found a corporal and made use of some more pesetas. When I came out with a pair of denim work pants and a khaki shirt over my arm, Jim Ellsworth was striding toward the plane from the direction of the operations office. I tossed the duds into the aircraft and went to meet him. Just then a Mercedes roadster came tearing around the far end of the line of hangars, raced toward us in a cloud of dust and screeched to a stop.

Out jumped the Marqués de Valderon and Captain Urquiza. Both were in service uniform, as was Jim. The Marqués had a riding whip tucked under his arm. He marched straight up to Jim.

"Well, señor?" he snapped.

"There is an aircraft standing there," Jim told him, "ready to take off for a training flight, which I have arranged for. The flight will involve parachute jumping. I have indicated on the flight plan that you and I will participate. There are two parachutes in the plane which I have selected personally. One comes from the ready storeroom, was checked and repacked yesterday and is in perfect order."

The Marqués' lips were whitening as he pressed them tightly together.

"The other parachute," Jim went on in the same matter-of-fact tone, "comes from a stock of old 'chutes which is awaiting the action of a

surveying officer. Its tag, before I removed it, showed that it had been in store a little over six months. That means the silk will be so packed down that the odds are perhaps ten to one that the parachute will not open."

He paused, looking hard at the Marqués.

The Marqués said nothing. He just waited.

"You have had some jump-training, I believe, senor Marqués?" Jim asked.

The Marqués nodded.

"Very well. I suggest that we get into the aircraft and take off. When we reach an altitude of one thousand feet, you may have your choice of parachutes—they are identical in appearance, I do not think you can see any perceptible difference between them. I will take the other. We will then both jump from the aircraft."

"Dios!" gasped Urquiza. "But this is a barbarism—"

The Marqués silenced him with a gesture.

"Very well, señor Coronel," he said quite steadily. "I agree."

"I make only one condition," Jim said. The Marqués lifted a supercilious eyebrow.

"Well?"

"If your chute opens, Marqués," said Jim, "I ask that after you have landed, you will offer no further objection to the training plan for the air-base guards which I have been sent here to command, but with which I will thereafter have no further connection."

The Marqués inclined his head slightly.

"I respect your devotion to duty, Señor Coronel," he said. "I agree to your condition."

"Then I think the plane is ready to take off," replied Jim Ellsworth.

He ran forward, spoke to the pilot, waved to us to get aboard. In the bucket-seat interior of the old craft, I could see no sign of Doña Ines, but I knew she was there somewhere. My chips were on that girl. She was my only hope. I stared at the two parachutes perched on a couple of bucket-seats near the rear of the plane. They looked as alike as two peas; but under their khaki casings, one was packed with life and the other with death.

The Marqués and Urquiza stood near the cockpit door, talking in low tones—Urquiza seemed to be trying to persuade the Marqués to chicken out on the deal, the Marqués kept shaking his head. Jim and I sat down and just waited. We had nothing to talk about—not right then anyway. The plane was off the ground now and climbing.

I kept wondering where Doña

Ines had hidden herself. My eyes kept going to the tail end of the passenger space where there was a canvas curtain behind which coats and other gear could be stowed away. I thought I saw that curtain move a little once or twice.

An airman stuck his head in from the cockpit.

"Pilot's compliments, señores," he said. "We are at 300 meters."

Which is 1000 feet or as near as makes no never mind.

Jim Ellsworth got up promptly.

Through the open jump-door, the rocky terrain of old Castile seemed to be a long way down.

Urquiza, almost in tears, caught at the Marqués' arm.

"In the name of all the Saints, my friend," he begged, "I implore you—"

The Marqués shook off the detaining hand.

"Would you have me dishonored?" he demanded. "I am ready to make my choice of parachutes, señor Coronel," he said to Jim.

"You are a trifle late, Diego," a clear voice answered from the rear of the plane. Four heads jerked around. Doña Ines de Valderon, wearing the shirt and trousers I'd brought from the hangar, was in the act of shrugging into a parachute harness. Only one parachute remained on the bucket seats.

"Ines!" yelled the Marqués, starting toward her. Jim and I started too: I managed to stumble against the Marqués. I wasn't sure what Ines was up to, but I didn't want it interfered with whatever it was. By the time the Marqués regained his balance and Jim got clear of the two of us, Ines was standing in the jump-door, facing inboard, her hands gripping the steel handles on either side. The parachute was strapped firmly to her slender body.

"Stay where you are, Diego," she warned in a voice crisp as steel filings. "I'll jump if you come any closer. Now listen—I have something to say to you. And to you too, Jaime. Either you will both give me your words of honor, instantly, that this absurd affair is at an end for all time—or I go out this door here and now. I am wearing the parachute that was destined for one of you. I do not know whether it is the one which would have carried one of you to safety, or the one which would have let one of you fall to his death. But if you refuse my request, that does not matter very much to me."

"Ines! I command you—"

Urquiza grabbed the Marqués as he lurched toward his sister.

"Back, you fool. She'll jump *now* if you try that. She means it. Look at her eyes."

"But—Ines—why? Tell me why?" squalled the panting Marqués.

"Because I can neither marry a dead man nor—as a point of honor—a live one who has my brother's blood on his hands. Therefore it matters nothing whether I live or die myself," Ines told her brother.

The Marqués gulped. He looked helplessly at Urquiza—at me—and finally at Jim Ellsworth.

They stared at each other for a very long minute.

"At least," said the Marqués in a choked voice, "I can now honorably withdraw my words as to your lack of courage, Señor Coronel."

"In which case," said Ellsworth, "I can offer my apologies for a blow struck in anger."

Suddenly the Marqués grinned.

"We had better have a talk, you and I," he announced. "I am the head of the House of Valderon, and I have a most headstrong and wilful sister who appears to have formed an attachment for you."

Ines, parachute bumping on her back, ran across the plane, threw her arms around her brother's neck and kissed him on both cheeks. Jim Ellsworth started edging over to get into this act, but I waylaid him.

"They're Spaniards," I reminded him. "It'll take them a good five minutes to unload their own emotions before either of 'em will have time to attend to yours. Meanwhile I have news for you. Our friend Walters is spark-plugging this Pundonor business."

"What makes you think so?"

I told him about Walters telephoning me and about the shooting-up of my taxi. Also about the note that had been sent to Ines the day we arrived.

"Walters was behind all that. Maybe he needs money, maybe somebody's got something on him," I said. "Anyhow he's not working for Mammoth, he's working for people who'd like to see the U. S. out of the air-base business in Spain. Guess who."

"But how do you know—"

"It's too simple," I explained. "Take last night. He knew you'd had a row with the Marqués, and he had an idea the two of you were going to have it out this morning but he wasn't sure just when and where. So he tried to pump me. Like a fool I let him know I was going to try to stop it. Remember, Jim, Walters was the only person in Madrid who knew that. He didn't want it stopped: the people he was working for wouldn't be happy about you—you were making better relations between Spaniards and Americans and they wanted worse relations. If you and Diego de

Valderon fought a duel—which he thought was going to happen—that would get rid of you one way or the other: you'd be dead or you'd be kicked out of the Army. If besides you happened to kill the Marqués, that would make bad blood between Spanish and American officers for years to come. When I said I'd meet him at eight, he figured the right angle—whatever was cooking was set for earlier. So he sent some boys to see I didn't go any place before then."

"Sounds like you have a point," Jim admitted.

"I've got another," I told him. "Walters was the only person in Madrid that we phoned to from Sanjurjo the other day to say when we'd be landing at Torrejon. He was already worried about the progress you were making. Knowing Don Diego's explosive Castilian character, he figured that reopening the Ines angle—which his employers probably had a dossier on from when you were here before—was the surest way to prevent you from doing as well here as you had at the other two bases. He just had time to get a note to her so's she could be there when you arrived. Like Sherlock Holmes used to say, when there's only one person who had the opportunity, that's the guy whodunit. We've got Mr. Walters in that spot on two counts. Whether we can prove it on him is another matter, but anyway he won't be getting any bonus from whoever's paying him for this job of work. He just might get something else, though."

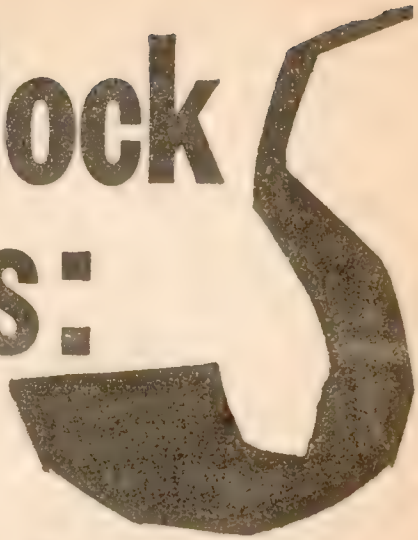
Jim stared at me a minute and then chuckled.

"It's you who'll be getting the bonus now," he said.

"Correct," I admitted, noting from the tail of my eye that Ines was untangling herself from her brother. "But I think a bonus'll be coming your way, too, in just about ten seconds."

I was so right. It was the second time in one morning I'd guessed right about Doña Ines de Valderon.

Mr. Sherlock Holmes: Scholar and Scientist



by EARL C. KUBICEK

Webster says that a scholar is "a learned person of thorough literary or scientific attainments", and that a scientist is "one learned in science".

Who—having followed the course of Mr. Holmes' many brilliant case deductions made public through the medium of the writing of his versatile friend, Dr. John Watson—can say that Holmes *was* not a scholar and scientist in every sense of these words?

Holmes displayed a rare discernment by applying his vast knowledge in the arts and sciences to the successful prosecution of his many cases as a private investigator.

When the time came for Sherlock Holmes to enjoy a well earned rest from active practice, "a quiet little farm upon the downs five miles from Eastbourne" beckoned. Here he could carry on his research and experiments in philosophy and agriculture. We know the exact location of his rural retreat through the writings of his Boswellian friend and colleague, Dr. John H. Watson. As a collaborator in Mr. Holmes' many adventures, Watson shared these bizarre excursions.

Holmes' present establishment is a small one including the master, his old housekeeper, and his bees. This little estate, exclusive in its

solitude, is a far cry from the Baker Street house—a combination bachelor establishment and laboratory—occupied jointly by Mr. Holmes and Dr. Watson.

Number 221B Baker Street was a mecca for many anxious persons seeking a solution to their multitude of problems, problems too complex to be entrusted to the regular law authorities. Only the brain of the famous Sherlock Holmes could be relied upon to solve these difficulties.

Dr. Watson, in making public the adventures of Mr. Holmes, opens many of the famous tales in similar fashion. Having a fine sense of the dramatic, Watson sets the scene by painting word pictures of the weather—the beating rain upon the window pane, the howling of November winds in the chimney—sounds peculiar to the London scene.

To all followers of the adventures of Holmes and Watson these introductions are warmly familiar, and the mere mention of these induces a peculiar nostalgia.

The sound of hurried footsteps upon the stairs of 221B Baker Street, the impatient jingle of the doorbell, a hurried whispered consultation with the faithful Mrs. Hudson at the door, and finally, the pleading anxiety of the client for the help of the master as the case is discussed—this is a scene dear to the heart of the true disciple of the Holmes Saga.

It is no mere happenstance that the services of Mr. Holmes were much sought after by those enmeshed in the many intricate problems that seemed to plague his clients. He was a scientist first and last. His methods and his application of them to the problems at hand were definitely scientific.

Our first introduction to Mr. Holmes underscores his passionate interest in scientific research. After Watson and "Young Stamford" had met in the Criterion Bar, and discussed the events of the years that had intervened since their last meeting years before, Watson expressed an interest in Stamford's friend as a possible roommate. The pair went to a hospital laboratory to meet Holmes.

Notwithstanding Stamford's rather perfunctory description of Holmes' ability as a chemist, his studies in anatomy and his wide acquaintance in many other fields of the sciences, Watson was intrigued.

The description of such a personality in more detail might have aroused some doubts in Watson's practical mind as to the advisability of teaming up with such an exotic figure.

The scene in the hospital laboratory awakened memories in Watson's mind of his own student days in medicine. It would be in such a place that we would expect to find Holmes, in spite of the fact that it was a holiday. He was holding forth in his experiments alone. Watson was fortunate enough to be present at the precise moment when Holmes had just brought to a successful conclusion an experiment which, like so much of his work, was to provide a practical means to combat the ills of society. He was truly a researcher in the field of sociology.

As with so many eminent scientists, Holmes was not above using his own person for experimental work or to illustrate a point. He, in the presence of Watson and Stamford, dug a "Long Bodkin" into his own finger to draw blood which he used while illustrating, to his auditors, that his recently discovered reagent would be precipitated by hemoglobin to give an infallible test for bloodstains. Watson reports that "Holmes' enthusiasm knew no bounds."

This interest in scientific research was the keystone, the touchstone, in Holmes' character. Watson assured Holmes at their first meeting that he would not mind the occasional experimentation in their apartments. Evidently Holmes respected the rights of his fellow lodger for the most part, for Watson tells that Holmes' habits were distinctly not of a character to make him, Watson, regret his initial decision.

Of course Holmes did have some very pronounced eccentricities which set him apart from ordinary men. It is the rare individual who pins his correspondence to the wall with a knife, or keeps his tobacco in the toe of a Persian slipper.

Watson once made the comment, a trifle petulantly, that their chambers "were always full of chemicals." Perhaps Holmes' research was of such a character that he could not, or did not wish to, carry them out in his former haunts, preferring the apartment.

In the matter of chemistry, Holmes' interest seems to have been focused, in the early stages at least, in the organic branch of the science. With his acute sense of analytical reasoning, and his ability in the observation of minutiae, he would naturally turn to the analytical branch of the science.

Watson's writings are replete with vignettes. Holmes in his dressing gown, working at his laboratory table in the dancing blue light of his Bunsen burner, was a sight that etched itself into the doctor's memory. At such times Holmes' preoccupation with his work would be so

deep that Watson could come and go unnoticed.

With his interest in chemical research, Holmes could have found congenial company among other personalities of history. Watson describes many behavior and personality traits in Holmes which appear to be similar to those common to Samuel Johnson as described by Boswell.

Even Boswell's first meeting with the doctor, in Johnson's library, was not unlike the initial encounter between Holmes and Watson. Boswell, on that occasion, "observed an apparatus for chemical experiments of which Johnson was all his life very fond." Boswell remarked that his idol, as late as 1782, had found amateur chemistry a means of mental relaxation after a severe paralytic stroke.

Watson has commented upon Holmes' fastidiousness about his person, and yet remarks that Holmes' hands were invariably stained with chemicals. These hands did not, however, lose their extreme delicacy of touch and our good friend, Dr. Watson, specifically notes his friend's ability to manipulate fragile instruments.

Holmes' extraordinary success in the application of scientific instruments to verify deductions was of prime importance in recommending their use to Scotland Yard. Holmes himself commented to Watson that in one outstanding case, that of detecting a counterfeiter through metallic filings in the cuff seams, made the Yard authorities realize the importance of the microscope in the field of scientific detective work.

While the major portion of Holmes' work was done in the British Isles, he did conduct some experiments on the continent. He did special work on coal-tar derivatives in the Montpellier district in the south of France.

This might mark him as an opportunist in a sense for these experiments were carried on following the harrowing experience of the Reichenbach Falls affair which was of such a character as to shake the nerves of a less strong personality.

In a casual aside to Watson, Holmes once commented that his knowledge was of an "out of the way" nature and "without scientific system." His mind, he said, had all sorts of material stored away for reference purposes.

The good doctor seems to have taken this casual remark for a statement of fact and, in his chosen role of mentor, he mildly criticized Holmes' seeming ignorance in certain fields, particularly that of contemporary literature. Holmes'

"naive" inquiry about Thomas Carlyle, to quote the doctor, really emphasized the fact that Holmes' "ignorance was as remarkable as his knowledge".

Closer observation of Sherlock Holmes' comments on these points will confirm our opinion that he was pulling Watson's leg. "A man who is able to compare Hafiz with Horace, to quote Tacitus and Thoreau, Jean Paul Flaubert, and Goethe without hesitation, is not the man to be lightly called unread."

Holmes played upon the credulance of trusting Watson in other cases. We may note this in his, Holmes', avowed enjoyment of loafing. He quoted Goethe to the effect that nature had been profligate enough to use up all the material on one man that could have been used to create two—the good man and the rogue. While Holmes may have been at rest physically on occasion, he seems to have been always mentally alert.

Watson has drawn such a picture of the two roommates at home. Watson is reading and Holmes is busily engaged, with a magnifying glass, studying clues in his latest case or relaxing by deciphering the remains of the original inscriptions upon a palimpsest.

Watson, after several attempts to draw his friend into conversation, would lapse into a grumbling silence and return to his reading.

This situation was not an unusual one for Watson to encounter. Holmes' ability to achieve an almost complete mental detachment from his surroundings, his talent for divorcing his thoughts from outside circumstances, was something that always excited wonderment on the part of his friend.

One fine spring morning, in Cornwall, while Holmes and Watson were in the course of investigating a particularly sinister mystery, Holmes exasperated the doctor by discoursing, at some length, upon the lore of kitchen middens of the vicinity.

The latter were things that interested Holmes. He had delved into the folklore of the Cornish people. Their language had also claimed his attention. He had propounded the theory that the Cornish folklore was akin to the Chaldean and had been largely derived from the Phoenician traders in tin.

His personal library had been augmented, a short time before their departure on the case in question, by a consignment of books upon philology intended to develop his thesis.

Sherlock Holmes, in spite of his marked reticence about expressing

his feelings, took especial pride in his authorship of many monographs on a wide range of subjects and also in the fact that some of his work was being translated into foreign languages.

His works ranged from a discussion on the variants in the human ear, which appeared in the "Anthropological Journal," to the essential differences in cigar, cigarette and pipe tobaccos, the tracing of footsteps, and the use of Plaster of Paris in preserving them for future investigations. He even delved into the study of the tradesman's hands and its relationship to its work. A familiarity with most of the then existent secret codes and writings had caused Holmes to prepare a monograph upon 160 ciphers. The great detective also found the time to digress into the exotic as witnessed by his writings on the art of tattooing.

All of these works may be considered trifling when compared with the magnus opus of Holmes' career, "The Practical Handbook of Bee Culture, With Some Observations Upon the Segregation of the Queen." Dr. Watson too, has in his writings on his friend, given us many hints as to Holmes' unpublished works.

Holmes had made some investigations into early English charters and Dr. Watson declared that the results of this research were so stimulating that he would publish a full report upon them at some future date.

The versatile Holmes also had a love of fine music. There were many occasions when he and Watson went to the theater to hear some outstanding artist then appearing in concert. Watson did not have a high regard for Holmes' ability with the violin, the latter's favorite instrument. If we are to believe Dr. Watson, the great detective was much better qualified as a theorist and historian of music than as an accomplished musician.

We are given a word picture of Holmes "returning refreshed to his monograph upon the Polyphonic Motets of Lassus" after the successful conclusion of a case. This paper, when published, was considered by experts in the field to be the final word on the subject.

His interest in this particular phase of musical lore is quite in keeping with his general introspective characteristics. Of the motets of Orlando de Lassus we are told, "they are written for voices ranging in number from two to twelve. One cannot play them for they are meant for voices only, and would be meaningless if played upon instruments. One can read them and,

with the ear of the mind, hear their complicated web of sounds."

The accomplishments of Holmes cannot be considered *outre.* He was, in many respects, a very methodical man, with the keen mind of the scientist, and the scholar's appreciation of the arts. He was a man who, in spite of the nervous energy that always threatened to consume him indulged in periods of lethargy "during which he would lie about with his violin and his books, hardly moving from the sofa to the table."

In the congenial surroundings of their Baker Street quarters, outside of which Holmes seemed uncomfortable, were initiated those feats of reasoning that led to the extraordinary accomplishments achieved by Sherlock Holmes

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OPIUM AND THE COMMUNISTS

Intelligence reports indicate that opium has become a factor in the political situation in north-eastern Laos where the peasants grow opium, now an illegal commodity in neighboring Siam. The peasants have now discovered, to their disgust, that the Communist "liberators" from the North have the same austere objections to the opium-traffic as does the anti-Communist Government in Bangkok. The poppy-growers have reacted violently to the discovery that the Communists would not tolerate the cultivation of opium in areas under its control (according to a dispatch from Hongkong) and a formidable and spontaneous opposition to Communist infiltration has developed among the natives who, while indifferent to conflicting ideologies, do believe in free enterprise. . . . . .

the adventure of the cloverdale kennels

by AUGUST DERLETH

The curious puzzle of the Cloverdale Kennels came to the attention of my friend, Solar Pons, late one night in the same summer which saw the deflation of the grandiose pretensions of Arthur Shaplow, the diverting case of the reluctant scholar, Ivor Allanmain, the riddle of the Sussex Archers, and the singular affair of the Lost Dutchman. Indeed, I had just finished filing my notes on two of these cases, was preparing to retire, content to leave Pons bent like a lean and hungry bird of prey over his retorts, deep in a chemical problem, when the outer bell rang.

Pons glanced at the clock on the mantel. "Mrs. Johnson will surely have retired by his hour," he said. "Run down and see who it is, Parker, like a good fellow."

Our caller proved to be a messenger boy with a wire for Pons. I asked him to wait for an answer.

Pons eagerly tore open the envelope. His keen eyes scanned the message before he handed it to me.

"CAN YOU COME HASLEMERE AT ONCE WOULD APPRECIATE YOUR ASSISTANCE IN MYSTERIOUS DEATH EDWARD HARTON—Hetherman."

"Hetherman," I said, looking up. "Do I know him?"

"You may recall that extraor-

dinary occasion when Inspector Jamison asked me to talk on the science of ratiocination to a group of down country police officers meeting in London, Parker. Detective Sergeant Hetherman was in the contingent from Surrey and came up to speak to me after the meeting. He cannot be more than thirty now, but struck me even then as a bright and promising young man."

There was no need to ask whether Pons intended to run down to Haslemere, for he had already taken up the Railway Guide and had begun to turn its pages.

"Harton's death must have taken place within the past few hours," he said thoughtfully. "There was nothing about it in the evening papers, and the most recent news summary on the B.B.C. made no mention of it." He paused, his eye arrested. "Ah, here we are. We've just missed the last train from Waterloo by a quarter hour. The next is at 5:25 in the morning. If your practise can spare you, we will be on it." His glance challenged me. "What do you say, Parker?"

"You know my answer," I replied.

Pons rapidly scrawled a message to Detective Sergeant Hetherman, and I delivered it to the waiting messenger below.

It lacked but a few minutes of seven o'clock next morning when the train drew into the station at Haslemere, which was in the south reaches of Surrey, less than fifty miles from London. Sergeant Hetherman stood waiting for us in the chill, misty dawn. He was a slender chap, as tall as Pons, with close-cropped hair and warm blue eyes. He shook my hand, at our introduction, with genuine heartiness.

"I have a car waiting, Mr. Pons," he said. "This is a country matter, and we must drive out of Haslemere. Have you had breakfast?"

"I prefer to dispense with food when I confront one of those little problems which give me so much pleasure," answered Pons, as we walked toward the car. "I could not help observing, Sergeant, that you carefully avoided calling Harton's death 'murder'. Is there doubt?"

"Well, sir, there is—but not much in my own mind. There seems to be a rather general acceptance among the neighbors that Harton took his own life. If he did so, his method was singularly round about, and there's no motive for suicide that I've been able to uncover."

"Perhaps we had better have an account of the matter," suggested Pons, as we seated ourselves in Sergeant Hetherman's car.

"Very well, Mr. Pons. Harton was

an employee of Mr. George Pelham, a businessman in Haslemere. Pelham's hobby is sporting dogs. Harton was manager and trainer of the Cloverdale Kennels, owned by Pelham. These kennels are approximately four miles out of Haslemere, and Harton didn't stay in town; he had rooms with Mr. and Mrs. Martin Coster, whose home is about three fields and a copse or two away from the kennels. Harton had been in the vicinity for six years or so. He was well known and well liked, to hear people talk."

"It always seems possible to prefer the outsider to the native," said Pons. "It is a sad reflection upon human nature that it is so. Where was Harton from?"

"London. Pelham had brought him down."

"A racing man?"

"No record of it, Mr. Pons."

"You have made inquiries, of course."

"Certainly, Mr. Pons."

"He came recommended?"

"Very well, sir. Pelham is a man who'd make certain of that—a real martinet and a bit stuffy."

"Very well. Go on, please."

"The kennels are one longish building, with the manager's little office—a small room with space for his assistant, Roger Ballinger, to work in—at one end. Harton was in the habit of working at a high desk, sitting on a stool, immediately next to the window at the very end of his quarters. He was sitting there last night when he was shot from a little grove of beech trees at the edge of the property, exactly a hundred yards away. He was shot with a rifle carefully supported by the trees and bushes of the copse, which was in line with the window."

"You recovered the weapon?"

"Yes, Mr. Pons."

"Is that not somewhat unusual in cases of murder, Sergeant?"

"Indeed it is, Mr. Pons."

Pons smiled. "I detect a note of uncertainty in your voice, Sergeant. What struck you?"

"Mr. Pons, it was his own rifle with which he was killed," answered Hetherman. "Furthermore, there was a cord attached to the trigger, and this cord was looped around the broken end of a stout twig, and carried back to the open window through which he was shot."

"Only to it?"

"No, over the sill and into the room."

"Within reach of Harton?"

"Yes, Mr. Pons. He could have pulled the cord."

Pons' eyes danced. "I believe my illustrious predecessor demonstrated his remarkable abilities in

a matter of like nature on a country estate near Winchester, if I am not mistaken. Shall we find it similar, I wonder? A hundred yards of cord! I fancy we have to deal with a remarkably cool intelligence. You have removed the rifle, Sergeant?"

"We examined it, of course, but we replaced it this morning specifically for your scrutiny. We have removed the body, however."

"Naturally, naturally. Now then, if we accept your conclusion that there was no motive—at least not a patent one—for suicide, did Harton have enemies who might wish to see him out of the way? Or who might wish him grievous harm?"

"I doubt it, sir."

Pons clucked. "Dear me, Sergeant. Again that note of uncertainty. Why?"

"Mr. Pons, it's like this. Harton was quite a man with the ladies. He was engaged for a good while to the daughter of his landlord, Miss Ethel Coster, but their engagement never seemed to get anywhere. A fortnight ago it came out that Harton had taken up with Miss Alice Fisher, and meant to marry her. She'd been engaged to Ronald Farrow, and had broken their engagement. Perhaps she was tired of waiting for him. Sometimes engagements run a long time in the country."

"Had this one?"

"Yes, Mr. Pons. Three years. And naturally, Farrow was furious. He put the blame on Harton, though it's my opinion that if there's any blame to be fixed it should be fixed on the lady, since she's the one to make up her mind and the man usually hasn't much to say about it. Now there's talk about that Farrow made some threatening remarks concerning Harton. But Farrow is known to be a blustering sort, unlikely to take any kind of action. All promise and no fulfilment, if you know what I mean, Mr. Pons."

"Ah, but sometime the worm may turn, Sergeant."

"I know, Mr. Pons. I'm afraid that people hereabouts really think it *has* turned. That's why they're all so close-mouthed and so eager to believe in Harton's suicide. Because, for all his bluster, Farrow is more popular than Harton was. Harton wasn't a good mixer, if it came down to it—didn't drink much, even though he went down to one of the pubs now and then for a game of darts."

"Everyone is capable of murder, Sergeant," reflected Pons. "Even if you are convinced Farrow is innocent."

"I am, it's true, sir. But then, you may be right, and I wrong. You come to know people one-sided like, and you set them in your mind

in a sort of groove. They might not be that way at all. But here we are at the scene, Mr. Pons. Now you may have a look around for yourself."

As he spoke, the car drew up into the driveway of a building some sixty feet in length, before which two constables stood on guard. From it rose the voices of several dogs, which carried sharply to the ear in the damp morning air. The mists were now rising a little, but still held to the countryside, filling the vales, so that trees seemed to rise out of them without trunks, making a spectral appearance in the landscape.

Sergeant Hetherman led the way into that end of the building which was clearly not used for kennels. The door opened upon a large room, obviously that of the manager and trainer. From this room another door on the right opened to an inner room, adjacent to the kennels, and a second door opened into a small room with a desk and some shelving, from which in turn two rather wide windows opened on the lawn outside the building. It was obvious that it was in this small room that Harton had died, for the high stool on which he had been sitting to work at the old-fashioned desk still lay on its side, and chalk marks, together with a splash of congealed blood on the floor indicated the position of the body when found. Sergeant Hetherman led us directly into this room.

"As you see, Mr. Pons, this is where the body lay. And there," he said, pointing to the sill of one of the open windows, "is the cord. The bullet entered Harton's head just above and behind the left eye, passed through, and lodged over there in the wall. You can see where we dug it out."

Pons walked over to the window and examined the cord. "Sixteen-ply," he murmured. "And seven feet of it in over the sill." He looked out the window. "It lies slack down the wall and across the grass. I take it that is the copse over there—just coming through the mist, Sergeant?"

"Yes, Mr. Pons."

"Dear me. He would have had to reel in the cord to get a tight enough hold on it to set off the rifle."

"Yes, sir."

Pons gazed at the end of the cord. "Cut with a scissors, I see."

"I hadn't noticed."

"I fancy you can't miss the obvious pressure marks from both sides," said Pons. "A knife tears from one side. The cut is very clean. I submit it was made by a small pocket scissors, not a large shears."

He dropped the cord and scrutinized the window sill, running his

fingertips lightly over it along the course of the cord. He leaned out the window once more, peering intently at the grass-covered ground beneath, and made clucking sounds with his tongue.

"Prints, too," he murmured. "Did any of your men walk up to this window, Sergeant?"

"No, Mr. Pons."

"Well, well, let us just see."

Pons turned and went out of the building. Presently he came into view outside the window, where he immediately went to his knees to peer intently at scarcely visible footprints in the still wet grass. A heavy dew made a faint outline of footprints leading up to the window and back toward the copse—or, quite possibly, the other way round. They were the prints of a man's heavy shoes, but were not, I judged, exact enough to enable the shoes themselves to be identified from them, for the dew outlined only the general indentation, and some of the grass forming its outline had already sprung back into place from the previous evening, when the footprints had presumably been made, for dew lay in the depression of the prints as well as outside.

Pons meanwhile paced off several of the steps. His stride was manifestly longer than the stride of the man who had made the footprints. He looked back at us, watching him from the window.

"Are these not short steps for a man with such large feet, Sergeant?" he asked.

"I would say so, Mr. Pons."

"Hm! Singular, singular indeed." He got down on his knees once more, peering intently at one footprint after another. "Uneven, too," he said. He picked up a strand or two of what I took to be cobweb; in another place he took from the footprint he was examining what appeared to be the torn fragment of a long leaf.

He got up finally, brushing at wet patches on his knees. "I commend these prints to your earnest attention, Sergeant," said Pons. "They are highly significant. Come along."

We hastened outside to join Pons, who was following alongside the line of footprints toward the copse. From time to time he bent down, picked up some minuscule object, and flicked it away or returned it to the place from which he had taken it. He was careful not to tread upon the white cord which lay beside the prints and ran up through the bushes to vanish behind the leaves of the copse. His eyes were aglow with suppressed excitement, as if the footprints told him far more than seemed visible to any other eye. In this manner we reached the copse.

Pons walked carefully around to where he could see the rifle propped in the crotch of a tree and supported by a limb under the stock. It was aimed from among leaves and pendant branches directly at the window. The white cord was still tied to the trigger. For the moment, however, he gave this but a cursory examination; he was still intent upon the prints, and he studied their leaving and entering the copse. Not satisfied with the scrutiny from his knees, he lay prone, regardless of the wet grass, and gazed at the prints with singular care. On the far side of the copse the prints were lost in deep grass which divided the copse from a gravel path.

Having seen so much, Pons returned to the rifle. His face wore the look of a dog on the scent. Without a word, he examined the loop of the cord around the broken branch.

"Freshly broken, I see," said Pons.

"Yes, sir."

"I submit it was for this purpose. Would not the sound of a breaking branch have disturbed Harton?"

"It might have."

"He could have heard it, in any event. But there is nothing to show that it was not broken after Harton's death."

"No, sir."

"Just come over here, Sergeant. Let me call your attention to the bark of the twig at the point of contact with the cord, and to the cord itself where it passes over the twig."

Sergeant Hetherman turned puzzled eyes upon the twig and the cord. His honest young face reflected his perplexity, but he forebore to put it into words.

"Most instructive," murmured Pons in his most irritating manner, without attempting to enlighten us.

Pons now turned his back upon the rifle and again resumed his scrutiny of the ground, now and then again dropping to his knees, as he progressed through the copse. When he came to the little open stretch of deeper grass beyond, he paused.

"Your men have walked through here, Sergeant?" he asked.

"Only along the near edge, Mr. Pons. We were looking for the footprints."

"You did not find them."

"No, Mr. Pons. Someone had passed through during the previous twenty-four hours—a child, perhaps, or a large animal—but certainly not the owner of the shoes or boots which made the prints leading to the kennels."

"So that it may have been that the tracks we followed came out from the kennels and returned there."

"We haven't discarded that possibility, Mr. Pons."

"It is always wise to keep an open mind, Sergeant. The obvious is sometimes most to be distrusted."

Pons pushed on through the deep grass to the gravel path, at which he looked with some annoyance.

"Where does this path lead, Sergeant?" he asked.

"To the road on the one side, and on the other to a lane which doubles back into Haslemere."

"A pity it is here. And the road?"

"The road is a continuation of the one we followed to the kennels. sir. It goes on to Bordon and turns north again for Godalming."

Pons stood for a moment deep in thought. Then he turned abruptly back toward the copse, passed through it, and went on to the Cloverdale Kennels once more, returning to the room where Harton had met his death. We were at his heels.

"If Harton sat at this desk, he must have been working," Pons said as Sergeant Hetherman came up behind him. "At what?"

"Mr. Pons, he was writing a personal letter."

"To whom?"

"I have it here." The Sergeant took a single sheet of notepaper from a leather folder in his breast pocket and handed it to Pons.

I read it over Pons' shoulder.

"The Kennels.
"Fifth.

"Look—aren't you making rather a fool of yourself with all this threatening and so on? It sounds like the devil, and it makes you look a good deal worse than if you just kept still. I've destroyed your notes —because you'd really look a fool if they fell into anybody else's hands, wouldn't you? Also, I'd be obliged if you'd send back my . . ."

Thus far Harton had got in his letter when he was interrupted. There was, however, nothing to show that he was at work on this letter when he was shot—no blot of ink, or scrawl of the pen, which might have been expected if the writer had been shot at this point.

Pons' thoughts had taken the same direction. "There would seem to be no way of demonstrating that this letter had not been begun earlier in the day, Sergeant."

"No, Mr. Pons."

"So that, if he were engaged on a report which it might have been expedient for someone should never see the light of day, for example, such a report could have been abstracted from the desk before the body was discovered."

"It's quite possible, sir. But I wouldn't know what kind of a report, Mr. Pons."

"Suppose he were preparing a report on his assistant, Sergeant. There are any number of possibilities."

"I see, sir," said the Sergeant dubiously.

"At what time, approximately, did the event take place?"

"That seems to have been determined quite exactly, Mr. Pons," said Sergeant Hetherman with some animation. "The shot was heard by several people. Roger Ballinger was walking dogs, as was his custom at that hour. Coster was in one of his fields, just finishing trimming the edge. Mrs. Coster was in the house. Miss Ethel was out beside one of the buildings on the farm teaching a new dog to retrieve. While none of them looked at a clock, all are agreed that the shot sounded just at dusk—a few minutes past nine o'clock I make it."

"Did anyone investigate it?"

"No. Coster thought someone was shooting at jackdaws. Mrs. Coster heard it but didn't register it clearly as a shot. Miss Ethel thought it was the backfiring of someone's motor. And Ballinger took it for boys at target practise. He had heard shots earlier in the evening, and seen some boys from Haslemere cycling out to a target range; he thought one of them might have fired a parting shot for the evening before returning to the village."

"Then Ballinger discovered the body?"

"Yes, Mr. Pons. When he came back, he put the dogs into their kennels; then he went around to the office and found Harton."

Pons looked at his watch. "It is now eight. Presumably Costers will be up and about. I should like to talk to them."

"You'll find them very straightforward people, sir," said Sergeant Hetherman. "We follow that lane beyond the copse; that will take us directly to their farm."

The three Costers were at breakfast when we arrived at their pleasant little country house. Learning that Pons and I had not yet broken our fast, Mrs. Coster, a buxom, capable woman with flashing brown eyes, insisted upon preparing bacon and eggs for us, while Sergeant Hetherman explained our presence.

"It was a great shock to all of us, Mr. Pons," said Mrs. Coster. "Edward was like one of the family, you might say. Of course, he was planning to leave us, now that it was likely he'd be married."

"Did he at any time show signs of nervousness or irritability, of being afraid for his life?" asked Pons.

"Never," said Mrs. Coster firmly.

" 'E wasn't afraid of nought nor nobody," said Coster in rough tones. His voice rumbled up from deep within his stout, hard-muscled body.

"But he told me just last week he'd had some threatening notes," said Miss Ethel in a gentle voice.

"Could we see them?" asked Pons.

"I believe he destroyed them," she answered. "He didn't take them seriously."

Mrs. Coster gave her daughter a hard look.

"How did Harton react to these threats, Miss Coster?" pressed Pons.

"He was annoyed."

"He didn't mention their author?"

"No, Mr. Pons. I suppose they weren't signed—though he didn't say so."

"Did he acknowledge any enemies?"

Here Coster answered. "Them as didn't like Pelham didn't like Harton. You know how 'tis with people."

"Mr. Coster," said his wife warningly.

"And there are people who don't like Mr. Pelham, I take it," said Pons reflectively.

"Tain't so much him, as what 'e does with his dogs."

"Mr. Coster," said his wife again.

"And what is that, Mr. Coster?" insisted Pons.

"They do say—crooked racing."

"I see. And people would quite understandably believe Harton had a hand in it."

"People who didn't know him might," said Mrs. Coster quickly. "None of us would."

Pons gazed at her thoughtfully. "Where were you, Mrs. Coster, when you heard the shot?"

"Right in this room, Mr. Pons."

"And you, Mr. Coster?"

"Up field."

Pons turned to Miss Ethel.

"I was outside," she said.

"Can you show me, Miss Coster?"

"Certainly."

She rose at once and led the way outside. She was not so much attractive as appealing, a woman close to thirty years of age, I judged, and there was a confident ease about her movements. She was plainly what most men would call "all woman". As soon as she stepped outside, her dog fell in at her heels.

She paused beside a long crib for grain. "I stood about here, Mr. Pons."

Pons bent, picked up one of pair of heavy brogans lying there beside the crib. He threw it, turning to the dog as he did so to cry, "Fetch, sir!"

The dog gave Pons a curious look, but did not move.

Miss Coster began to laugh. "You don't seem to have any power over dogs, Mr. Pons. Perhaps the ladies resist you, too?"

Pons smiled. "I remain dogless and a bachelor by choice, Miss Coster. But of course your dog is not really a retriever, is he?"

"No, Mr. Pons. I tried with little success for an hour or more last evening to teach him to retrieve. You see how little he has learned."

Pons turned a little and looked back in the direction of the Cloverdale Kennels. "The shot must have been quite clear from here," he said thoughtfully.

"It was, Mr. Pons. But you know, with all the calling to the dog, and the dog's barking, I couldn't be sure it was a shot. It was only afterwards—when . . ." Here she paused and bit her lip, the only sign of emotion she had so far shown at the death of the man who had until so recently been her fiance.

"Well, we must not keep Mrs. Coster's breakfast waiting," said Pons briskly.

After a delicious repast, we started back for the Kennels once more, Pons having expressed the wish to talk to Roger Ballinger. The morning mists had now risen; sunlight shone from every drop of dew, and the countryside glowed with green, touched by heather now beginning to bloom. The great mound of Hindhead rose in the northwest, and the slopes of the generally high country where Haslemere lay—the highest land in Surrey—aglow in the morning sun, set Pons to musing of that distinguished citizen of Haslemere named Oglethorpe who had founded Georgia in the United States, and of the Dolmetsch family of musicians who made the town their home—all this somewhat to Sergeant Hetherman's perplexity, for, being unacquainted with Pons' annoying manner of speaking about anything but the matter in hand, he was woefully bewildered.

Ballinger was not alone at the Kennels when we arrived. The owner was with him. Ballinger was a lithe young man of twenty-five, while Pelham was a thick-set man of fifty or more; the one was as polished as the other was rough.

"I'm glad Hetherman had the good sense to call you in, Mr. Pons," said Pelham at being introduced to us. "Though it seems perfectly clear to me. I understand they've detained Farrow for questioning. They'll have it out of him."

"If I have a vice, it is distrust of the obvious, Mr. Pelham," said Pons.

"Stuff and nonsense, sir," said

Pelham gruffly. "It's a simple matter. Either Harton committed suicide or he didn't. He had no reason to commit suicide . . ."

"None at least so far known to us," said Pons.

Pelham brushed this aside. "So if he didn't take his own life, then he was murdered—cord or no cord. If you ask me, the cord's a red herring. I'll say it straight, Mr. Pons—young Farrow had a reason to get even with Edward Harton. Even if Harton didn't send him those notes."

Pons turned to the Sergeant. "Notes, Sergeant Hetherman?"

The Sergeant looked apologetic. "Farrow claimed to have received notes in the mail taunting him with not being a man—to let Harton take his girl from him."

"You neglected to mention it."

"I'm sorry, Mr. Pons. We have no evidence that this is so. Farrow says he destroyed them. He may never have received them."

"How many?"

"Three, he said."

Pelham snorted impatiently. He turned and flung his arm toward the copse. "And there are prints of a man's shoes there. What more do you need?"

"I submit there are one or two little points that would seem to need elucidation," said Pons. "For instance, the prints were made by someone who walked awkwardly, as if in some way physically defective. He was also unusually light for the size of the prints, for, if you will observe the prints in the bare soil around the copse near the path, you will notice that no very great indentation has been made. And such as is there is most uneven, indeed. I've not seen Mr. Farrow; I am not sure at this point that it will be necessary to avail myself of the privilege of speaking to him. I rather think there is nothing I can learn from him. Is he, Mr. Pelham, either physically defective or unusually light?"

Pelham glared at Pons in astonishment not unmixed with a little scorn. "Farrow's a big man—almost as big as I am. He's no lightweight."

"So then, let us eliminate him," continued Pons. "Could it be possible that Harton, discovering that he had become unwittingly involved in a scandal, took his own life?"

Again Pelham snorted. "What kind of talk is this, Mr. Pons? What scandal?"

"Let us just speculate for the moment, Mr. Pelham, and suggest that it might be fixed races."

A cloud of rage darkened Pelham's face; his nostrils began to twitch with fury. He half raised a clenched fist as if to strike Pons, but controlled himself with manifest effort.

"I bid you good-day, Mr. Solar Pons," he said, turning on his heel to stalk away.

"Mr. Pelham is a man of strong temper," said Pons, after Pelham had driven away.

"Perhaps your example was ill-advised, sir," said Ballinger loyally.

"If so, it was by design," said Pons crisply. He gazed for a moment intensely at Ballinger. "I daresay you will inherit Harton's position, Mr. Ballinger?"

"Mr. Pelham has suggested as much," answered Ballinger stiffly.

Pons nodded. "Now, sir, you were out walking the dogs, I understand, when the fatal shot was fired."

"I was, Mr. Pons. It's my custom to take the two Dobermans out at that time of the evening."

"Invariably?"

"Yes, Mr. Pons."

"Were you seen by anyone?"

Ballinger flushed a little, as if startled by Pons' question. He cleared his throat nervously and said, "No, Mr. Pons."

"I fancy this custom of yours was known to all persons interested in the Kennels?"

"I believe it was. People who come here at all are generally aware of our routine."

"So that anyone intending harm to Harton could be certain that you would not be in the immediate vicinity of his office?"

"I believe that is correct, Mr. Pons. I take the dogs over along the road to Bordon, and we walk for somewhat over a mile to a culvert where the dogs run loose for a bit. Then we return. I'm usually gone about forty minutes. I leave here at sundown or a bit before."

Pons stood for a moment tugging at the lobe of his left ear. Then he said, "I daresay you knew Harton as well as anyone. Did he seem in any way troubled recently?"

Ballinger grinned grimly. "Troubled? Well, Mr. Pons, he was always having woman trouble, if you know what I mean. Otherwise, no."

"Did he ever make any adverse reference to Donald Farrow?"

Ballinger shrugged. "Only to the extent of calling him an oaf in conversations with me. But perhaps he did so elsewhere; when he was irritated, he wasn't very tactful. I think anyone could tell you that. Try the pub—the Walk Inn on the near edge of Haslemere; he was there often enough, and I suspect they'd tell you the same thing."

"Did you yourself ever have any disagreements with him, Mr. Ballinger?"

"Only such as might arise between a professional and a man coming almost new into the game.

And I'd have to admit I had coming what I got."

"In short, Harton lived pretty much for himself, without regard for the reactions of others?"

"Don't we all, Mr. Pons? I mean, we all think first of ourselves. That's only human. Some of us do it smoothly, and some don't care. Like Mr. Harton."

Pons nodded. "Tell me, Mr. Ballinger, was Harton in the habit of bringing his rifle to the Kennels?"

"I never knew him to bring his rifle here, sir."

"He hunted?"

"Yes, sir. Apart from women, it was his only recreation, Mr. Pons."

"Thank you. That's all, Mr. Ballinger."

Ballinger walked back toward the Kennels, leaving us to stand where we were. For a few moments Pons said nothing, but his eyes were fixed on a point in space far ahead of him, and wore that expression of intense concentration which gave evidence of the ratiocinative process. It was Sergeant Hetherman who broke in upon him.

"Mr. Pons, if I might ask—you called my attention to the cord and the twig around which it was looped. I've examined it and found nothing."

"Precisely, Sergeant. That was the point. There was no evidence that the cord had ever been tightened on the twig—no rubbing of the bark, no fragments of bark adhering to the cord, which indicated that the cord had been put up only to distract us from evidence of murder. That should dispose effectively of the inclination to believe that Harton took his own life."

Sergeant Hetherman nodded, as if to confirm his own convictions.

"A singularly well thought out murder, too, Sergeant," continued Pons. "By the way, you ought to lose no time setting Farrow free. He had nothing whatever to do with Harton's death."

"Very well, Mr. Pons."

"As for the murderer," continued Pons, "I rather think that if you pick up that pair of brogans standing beside Coster's grain crib, you'll find that they will fit the prints you've marked off leading into and out of the copse on the side toward the lane. Moreover, a close scrutiny of the grass should reveal to you—as it did to me—tiny fragments of fertilizer, maize-husk, and maize-silk, which indicate that the wearer came from a farm in the vicinity—not far enough away to have worn off this evidence—though I fancy the brogans were carried to the scene and back. Coster would seem to be one of the few farmers who is experimenting in the raising of

maize, and the evidence therefore, is conclusive."

"Coster!" cried Sergeant Hetherman. "But why?"

Pons gave him a sympathetic glance. "Alas, no, Sergeant. Harton was slain by Miss Ethel Coster, wearing her father's brogans. Coster in his own shoes would have left a far more definite print, and there would have been no uncertainty about any prints left by him—as there were by Miss Ethel's small feet in her father's shoes. You'll probably find the ball from which she cut the cord on the Coster farm; it is a cord common to farm use in England. Of those people who obviously had reason to hate Harton, she was the only one who had access to his rifle. Hell hath no fury like a woman scorned! I fancy she tried at first to provoke Farrow into violence against Harton—if we can believe him about the notes he had received, and there is no reason why we should not. And, Sergeant, I should not be surprised if you found that Miss Ethel is a devotee of the adventures of my illustrious master."

While Sergeant Hetherman stood in amazement slowly giving way to belief, Pons looked at his watch. "I daresay we have just time to make the 11:19 for London, Sergeant, if you will be so good as to run us back into Haslemere."

"It is really elementary, when you consider the problem," I said, once we were comfortably seated in our compartment on the short run back to Waterloo Station. "Circumstantial evidence was certainly deceptive in this case."

Pons sighed. "My dear fellow, circumstantial evidence is deceptive only to those who have no ability to interpret it properly. Facts are facts, and any unbiased, ordinarily intelligent approach to them cannot fail to read them without error.

"Consider, for example. The cord was cut with a scissors—moreover, a small scissors, of a type commonly used by women rather than men. A man customarily cuts with a knife, looping the cord and slashing it. While this in itself is hardly conclusive, it struck me at once as most suggestive. Next, the tracks left by the murderer. These were clearly made by a man's shoes, worn by someone with unusually small feet—such as Miss Coster obviously has. But again, this too is highly speculative. Add to it, however, anonymous notes sent to goad Farrow to violence, and you begin to perceive a feminine intelligence in the matter. Let us go on to Harton's unfinished letter. Did nothing about it strike you, Parker?"

"Certainly. It supported the

known fact that Farrow had made threats against Harton."

"Dear me," said Pons testily. "I thought it quite the contrary. How did he phrase it? 'Look—aren't you making rather a fool of yourself with all this threatening,' he began. And he went on, 'I've destroyed your notes—because you'd really look a fool if they fell into anybody else's hands . . .' And then he asks that something of his be sent back to him. Now, my dear Parker, I submit that this is patently not the kind of letter a man sends to another man; no, this letter was clearly being written to a woman. Moreover, it was to a woman who had threatened him—not publicly, but privately, in 'notes', a woman who has something of Harton's—very likely letters. Who else could this be but his former fiancée, Ethel Coster? Certainly it could not be intended for Farrow.

"Further, when at last I saw the girl, I was more than ever convinced that she was our quarry. She was calm, collected, cool. But she made two little slips, quite apart from the fact that she had manifestly *not* been training her dog very much at retrieving—retriever or no, every dog can be taught to retrieve after a fashion, and had the dog been so taught, he would have made after the brogan when I threw it."

"If she made slips, as you say, they were beyond me," I put in.

"Ah, Parker, you've always had an eye for the ladies—exterior first—and I am considerably more interested in what goes on inside their pretty heads. Miss Ethel said that Harton had had 'some threatening notes'; who would know this better, since she sent them? Unfortunately for her, when she dropped the cord inside the Kennels after killing him, she did not take time to look at the letter Harton had been writing, or she might have seen her notes mentioned.

"Secondly, she made a curious and tantalizing slip in our conversation at the maize-crib. She said, if you will remember, 'You don't seem to have any power over dogs, Mr. Pons. *Perhaps the ladies resist you, too?*' Now, I submit this is *not* the kind of remark one makes casually to someone one has only just met. No, indeed. It came up from deep in Miss Coster's subconscious, for she was very much bound up in the problem of lovers and engagements—particularly broken engagements—and fading hopes of marriage, and in the concealment of that fury of hatred at being thrust aside for another woman which drove her to take the life of the man she had hoped to marry.

"Miss Ethel had the strongest mo-

tive of all—revenge. When young Ballinger told us that Harton never brought his rifle to the Kennels, the matter was plain as a pikestaff. Where was it, then, but in the Coster home, where Ethel need only walk into his room and take it? She had the opportunity to use it, and she knew just when to do so, for the crime was patently committed by someone who knew the routine of the Kennels."

"Yes, it is all perfectly clear now," I conceded.

"I daresay this little problem established a sort of record, Parker—though I cannot be certain; you are more fond of these inconsequential details than I—but I cannot recall a puzzle which has consumed less time. Three hours, I make it."

WASHINGTON POLICE ACADEMY

The Washington Police Academy, described locally as "a finishing school for experienced officers", resumed sessions, soon after the New Year, for the first time in ten years. A class of 48 students, including park policemen and military policemen, attended the four week course which was to be addressed by local experts in picking pockets, ballistics, moulage and other areas of police work. Lack of funds to pay for out-of-town lecturers no doubt influenced the feeling of a local police official,—"we have just as many qualified experts in the Washington area as any we could import." The lecturers included representatives from the Immigration Service, the Postal Inspection Service, the Coroner's Office, the United States Attorney's Office, a Corporation Counsel, a Federal narcotics agent, FBI men and a newspaper editor.

The classes were first started in January, 1942, under the supervision of Captain John L. Fowler, the foremost ballistics expert in the Police Department at the time. The courses, which then lasted six weeks, were not intended to replace the so-called "rookie" school, but rather to broaden the experience of already knowledgeable police officers. Twenty-two classes were graduated from the Academy until it was discontinued in 1950, mostly Metropolitan policemen, but also military policemen, park police, and representatives of the police forces of the nearby areas in Maryland and Virginia.

Zuman

THE MAN WITH TWO SHADOWS

TWO SHADOWS

by WENZELL BROWN

Perhaps the seeds of hatred had been sown the night they first met. But the blind murderous rage that engulfed Ralph Allen had been long in its-growing. Even Ralph could not pin-prick the precise moment when he had reached the decision to kill Randolph Ames. The idea had been with him a long time but at first it had been vague, part of a dream world, little more than a fantasy.

Now as he braced himself against the whip of the cold wind and felt the metal of his weapon heavy in his gloved hand, he knew that he was committed, that there was no turning back. Soon the frustration and anger of years would reach its fruition in an act of violence that would send a body hurtling through the black pit of the night to its death.

Sometimes in his more rational moments Ralph had admitted that Randy Ames might never have done him an injury purposely, that out of a sense of pity, he had even tried to help him on occasions. Pity! The word sent flames of rage through Ralph, dispelled any remnant of objectivity. Only one thing could satisfy his lust for revenge. Randy must die.

Ralph drew his overcoat more tightly about him and crouched deeper in the shadows. How long

must he wait for Randy? Maybe only minutes. Maybe an hour if Randy had met friends and stopped to have a few drinks with them. Time enough to remember the hurts, the grief, the humiliations that Randy had caused. Time to bank the fires of his wrath so that his resolve would not weaken.

Randy had become an obsession. Each success of Randy's had a counterpart in Ralph's failure. And Randy had had ample success. Far more than his worth as a man or his talents as an actor merited. Randy was riding under a lucky star, getting every break in the game, heading straight for the top. What the hell, why should Ralph try to kid himself? Randy was in the big time already and he'd stay there for the rest of his life unless somebody pulled him down. Somebody like Ralph Allen.

Every time Ralph passed the Godolphin Theatre, he had a fresh reminder of Randy's success. There was the name Randolph Ames in bright lights at the very top of the marquee. Even from Times Square you could see it. Hell, you couldn't miss it. Not unless you were blind. But what did you have to do to find Ralph's name? First you paid for admission to see THE PRINCE'S CHARIOT, then you thumbed through your Playbill, working your way through the cast until you came to the very end. There was a little paragraph there listing the understudies. If you looked hard enough you could find Ralph Allen's name. He was billed all right but not as prominently as the master electrician or the wardrobe mistress. They were really important; Ralph was only a supernumary and he always would be unless something happened to Randy Ames.

So what? Randy could fall downstairs and break a leg. He could get smashed up in a taxi accident. Then Ralph could jump into the number one spot overnight. They'd change the naked bulbs over the Godolphin's marquee and fill in a new name. Yeah, and this time it would be the right one too. Because Ralph Allen knew he was a better actor than Randy Ames would ever be. All Randy had was good looks, flash and the blessing of Lady Luck.

Randy lying in a hospital, or on a slab in the morgue; Ralph jumping into his place as leading man in the PRINCE'S CHARIOT—that had been something to dream about. Sure, but it was a dream that came straight out of a pipe. Nothing had ever happened to the Randys of the world. They never hit a red light, never got the brush-off from a dame, never tasted the

bitter gall of defeat. All the same no one could stop you from dreaming; there wasn't even a law to prevent you from working out ways to make your dream come true. Of course you never really believed you'd pull anything like murder. But just thinking about it helped to ease the sting of skulking around the wings of the theatre night after night while Randy Ames went out to take his final bow to the thunderous applause of the jammed house.

Well, that was over. Randy had just one more bow to take and there'd be nobody around to see it except Ralph. Tomorrow Randy Ames would make the headlines for the last time. Pretty soon he'd be forgotten. Then Ralph would have the chance for success that had been denied him for so long.

Ralph would never forget his first meeting with Randy Ames. They'd both been seventeen at the time, freshmen at Avery College. Avery wasn't in the Ivy League class. Not quite. But it was a good old New England College with a solid rep, the kind you could be proud of. Ralph was walking on clouds that night, feeling big, important, the way only a seventeen year old kid can when he's being rushed by the swankiest fraternity on campus.

Rho Gamma Nu had rolled out the red rug and nothing was too good for the selected group of freshmen who were potential pledges. Randy was in. One of the elect. He could feel it in his bones. Then he looked across the crowded room and saw the eyes of Randy Ames fixed upon him. Right off he got a queasy feeling in the pit of his stomach, a sense that something was wrong although he couldn't tell what it was. Of course he didn't know Randy's name then. The guy was only a stranger, nice-looking, clean-cut and there wasn't any mockery in his smile that night; it was wide-open, friendly. All the same Ralph had got the wind up, had felt his knees go weak beneath him.

He'd turned aside but out of the corner of his eye, he'd seen the stranger threading his way toward him. He didn't know how it happened but the two boys with whom he'd been talking faded out of the picture and he and Randy were alone in the corner of the room. Randy was still smiling when he stuck out his hand and introduced himself. "Hi," he said, "I've been looking for you. A couple of my friends told me I've got a double on campus. That's you, poor guy."

At first Ralph couldn't take it in. He had a picture of himself in his

own mind and that picture wasn't anything like the youth in front of him. Randy was smooth, poised cocksure of himself. He was a handsome devil too, with an easy-going charm that set him apart from the rest of the college crowd. Ralph wasn't like that. He was insecure, bumbling, gauche. Oh, the physical resemblance was there all right; you couldn't deny it. But Randy was a sort of glamorous version of Ralph, the kind of a person that Ralph would have liked to have been if he'd possessed some magical power to make himself over.

Ralph couldn't think of anything to say. He could feel the flush of embarrassment mounting to his cheeks and beads of perspiration sprouting along his forehead. A hollow was forming inside of his stomach and he shuffled his feet uncomfortably.

Randy flung an arm around his shoulders. "Come now," he said, "it's not all that bad. Let's find a mirror and learn the wicked truth."

The mirror was a long one, in the front hall, lit by dim bulbs at either end. Reluctantly Ralph let himself be drawn into place beside Randy. Suddenly it seemed as though there were four of them, instead of two. The resemblance was uncanny and yet there were marked differences. At certain angles where the light shadowed the eyes or blunted the features the pair might be mistaken for identical twins but, taken feature by feature, the resemblance faded and made you wonder why it had seemed so strong a moment before.

The rough part of it was that Randy scored on every point. Randy's hair was a glossy brown that caught the light and seemed to hold it; Ralph's was a shade paler and appeared dull, almost mousy, in comparison. Randy's eyes were a clear live blue. Ralph's were tinged with gray and, though it had never occurred to him before, he realized that they had a slightly washed-out look. The bone structure of Randy's face was more finely chiseled, the mouth firmer, the chin stronger. His skin was more deeply pigmented and he did not suffer from the slight pimply rash that ridged Ralph's temple. Randy was taller by a half inch, a few pounds heavier. It was in their clothing that the most marked contrast appeared. Ralph's suit had come straight off the rack at Hank's Bargain Basement. His tie was slightly askew, his collar beginning to wilt. Ralph had never thought much about clothes before but he recognized that the careless drape of Randy's jacket was the result of expert tailoring, that every accessory had

been chosen with a careful eye to create a well-groomed look.

Ralph catalogued his own shortcomings one by one. He'd never felt so shabby before, so inconsequential. Then he looked up and saw that a knot of boys had gathered around them and he was certain that they all saw him as he'd been forced to see himself. Not as a person in his own right but as a pale reflection of Randolph Ames. They were joking, wise-cracking about the resemblance. A voice rose higher than the rest, "Hey, Randy, this guy's a carbon copy of you."

That's the way it was too. Randy was the genuine article; Ralph was the imitation, blurred, faded, not quite real. Only a few minutes ago Ralph had been basking in his own importance; now he wanted to find a hole where he could hide; he wanted to crawl through the wall, get away some place where he could be himself again. All the same he stuck out the evening because becoming a member of Rho Gamma Nu was important to him. He'd have been better off though if he'd followed his first impulse and pulled his freight quick. Somehow he drifted over into a corner and it was as though he'd become invisible. Nobody noticed him. Gradually everybody gathered in a circle and right in the center was Randy Ames.

A week later the list of pledges was posted. Randy's name was right up on top, but Ralph's was missing. In his mind, Ralph could hear the boys talking. "Sure, we want Ames but why Allen? Why accept a shabby substitute when you've got the real thing?" Randy had made him an outsider, had been the cause of his rejection. Ralph brooded over it but he told himself he could still turn the tables, prove himself the better man.

He wasn't big but he was wiry, quick. There was one sport in which he excelled. Tennis. Maybe he wasn't in the professional class but in high school he'd been good enough to win the State singles championship. Making the varsity team in his freshman year at Avery should be a lead-bit cinch. He showed up for practice every day, sharpening up his game, covertly watching the other players. There wasn't one of them he couldn't take.

Randy Ames appeared at the tennis courts now and then. Randy, his white ducks perfectly pressed, his sport shirt open at the throat, looked every inch the athlete. But he played a slow easy-going game. Muffing his service half the time, letting the ball whiz by him, when Ralph would have been after it like a shot. Ralph kept his distance when Randy was about. Sooner or later

he'd take the guy on and make mince-meat out of him. But he wanted everything just right, a crowd around, the coach watching. He wanted everyone to know that in tennis at least, he didn't have to play second fidlle to Randy Ames, that he was the boy on top.

Randy made it easy for him. The setting was just the way Ralph wanted it when Randy threw down his challenge. The first set wasn't bad. Ralph won the first game and kept the lead all the way. Randy was missing his serves, goofing up on the fast shots but the crazy part of it was that he was scoring all the same. He was moving effortlessly, almost lazily but he seemed to have some intuitive knowledge as to where Ralph would place his shots and to be on the right spot to send the ball cannoning back.

It wasn't until the second set that Ralph realized that he was in trouble. Randy served the first ball and it went sloping into the net. Ralph looked up to see Randy watching him with a sardonic smile that barely touched his lips; then the second serve came over fast, almost at his toes. It caught Ralph flat-footed, off balance. He flailed out, nicked the ball with the edge of his racket and sent it skittering into the grass verge.

He couldn't have told why but he was trembling when he took his position in the opposite court. It was as though he weren't playing Randy Ames any more but struggling against some super-self who knew in advance every move that he would make. Each time he looked at Randy it was like peering into the mirror that night in the fraternity house. He saw himself as a pale, ineffectual duplicate of the youth who faced him. Randy seemed to sense it too. He was playing with cool automatic precision, sometimes driving the ball hard into the far corners of the court, sometimes lobbing it over the net so that it landed with a contemptuous thud at Ralph's feet.

When the score stood three-love and Ralph hadn't made a point, he should have called it a day. Sure, it was easy to see that later on. What he had done was to go wild, lashing out at the ball in desperation, smashing it into the net or high above the court. He wasn't even looking at Randy any more and when he scooped down for a net ball, he was surprised to hear Randy's voice, light and clear. "Hey, take it easy, kid. You'll get your marbles back."

He straightened up and saw Randy's face separated from him by only a few feet. He forgot all about the game, the watching

crowd, the coach whom he'd set out to impress. All he could see was the face with its puzzled frown that didn't quite conceal the mockery in the too clear blue eyes, the disdain in the slightly curved lips. He lunged forward his racket raised high, smashing downward at the hated face. The jarring impact of the blow numbed his arm. But it wasn't Randy that he'd struck. The racket had grazed the steel post that supported the net. The splintering of wood and the rip of cat-gut brought him partly to his senses.

He stared down at the smashed racket for a moment. Then he let it drop from his hand. He walked away, not looking at Randy again, not looking at anything, his eyes straight ahead. The crowd would be watching him, he knew, the coach too. As soon as he was out of hearing they'd start yammering about what a bum sport he was, how he blew his top and went berserk when the game was going against him. They didn't know the truth and he couldn't tell it to them, even if they'd listen. But one thing was for sure, as far as tennis was concerned he was washed up. Since then he'd never touched a racket. He'd never wanted to.

Kid stuff. Sure it was. A man's life isn't ruined because he doesn't make a fraternity or can't play tennis. But this cut a lot deeper. How long could you live when your identity had been submerged? It was as though he no longer had a personality of his own but had become Randy Ames' second shadow. Go your way. Forget Randy. How many times had he given himself that advice? But how could you do it with reminders constantly present?

He'd go out on the campus and some one would call, "Hi, Randy," then do a double-take and pass on. Or at night, he'd hear footsteps pounding after him. A hand would reach out for him, or a friendly arm would wrap around his shoulder. He'd swing about and see the grin change to a startled look. "Gosh, I'm sorry. I thought you were Randy Ames. You look enough—" He wouldn't be listening. He'd be walking away. But inside himself he'd be running. Not knowing whether he was fleeing from Randy Ames or himself.

He'd never thought of himself as popular but he'd never been lonely before either. Now the campus seemed a desolate wasteland, and it was made worse by the gaiety that he glimpsed but in which he had no part. Randy Ames in his flashy sports car, chatting to some giggling co-ed. Randy Ames sprawled on the grass, an admiring coterie about him.

Ralph moved off the campus to a room down-town, deliberately isolating himself. He stuck to his studies, his attempts at writing. But no matter at what he turned his hand, Randy always capped him off. Ralph barely missed honors list because of a C in math; Randy drew straight A's. Ralph worked for weeks over an entry for a short story contest. He received honorable mention; Randy won first prize. It was the same when he went out for the debating team, when he entered the prize speaking contest. He couldn't win, not with Randy on the scene. There was nothing to do but quit, leave Avery College, go somewhere else where he could be himself again.

He would have made the decision earlier if he hadn't found two loves that temporarily drove his hated of Randy to the back of his mind. One love was the theatre. The other was Shira Bagdalian. The two were inextricably mixed. One afternoon he'd drifted into the college's little theatre at the far end of the campus and stumbled into the midst of a rehearsal. Even in his inexperience he had recognized the crudeness of the amateur performance. He'd sat down in the back row watching with slightly contemptuous amusement as the players went through their parts. Then Shira came to the center of the stage and suddenly Ralph found himself leaning forward with anticipation. The girl wasn't beautiful, not in the accepted sense, but she was a person in her own right. The dark pixie face was too thin-boned, the nose and chin a bit too pointed. Her hair was jet black and fell down over her shoulders and her skin had a deep olive tint. There was something wild, impetuous, rebellious about her flashing eyes, her vivid coloring, her strangely full lips. She was playing the role of a shrew, stamping her feet, screaming at her bumbling lover.

Ralph watched and instinctively he knew how the lover's part should be played. More than that he was filled with a burning desire to step into the role, to become, for a while at least, another personality far removed from Ralph Allen.

When the rehearsal ended, he found himself drawn back stage, mixing with the players, his shyness, his awkwardness forgotten in their shared enthusiasm. He was himself again, not the shadow of Randy Ames. Because the group was small, they welcomed him. Soon all his idle time was filled with the theatre. Even while attending lectures, in his mind's eye he would be before the footlights, absorbed in the role of Marchbanks

in Shaw's Candida, Mercutio, or one of Noel Coward's light-hearted heroes.

He had a flair for acting which won him quick recognition in the group. He could submerge his own identity and assume that of another person so completely that, for a time, Ralph Allen ceased to exist. His triumphs were minor because the little theatre drew only a scattered audience when they put on a production but Ralph did not care. He was driven now by something more than personal ambition, caught up in the magic world of the theatre that brought its own rewards.

Then, too, there was Shira. As Ralph drew closer to her, he became enchanted, almost enslaved, by her passionate wilfullness. He made no attempt to understand her tempestuous moods—her flashes of anger that were suddenly replaced by laughter, her petulance that gave way to warm sympathy, her stubborn silences that ended in bursts of light-hearted chatter. She was Shira. That was enough for him.

Shira lived in the town, above the curio shop which her father owned. Before the month was up, Ralph was spending half his evenings there. Sometimes they'd practice their roles in some forthcoming production or read over new plays. More often they'd just sit talking, listening to the recorder or leafing over theatrical magazines. For both of them the theatre was all important. They were certain they'd fight their ways to stardom, see their names in bright lights. They'd do it together. As a team. Like Lunt and Fontaine who were their idols.

Shira's parents had regarded him warily at first but after awhile they'd accepted him. Their apartment had become his second home. And then it happened. The thing that he feared. Randy Ames got into the act and destroyed everything for him.

The debacle had occurred just before Christmas in his Sophomore year. That was the one time when the theatre group was assured of a big audience because they put on the show in the college auditorium just preceding the Christmas ball. It was a Tennessee Williams play with Ralph and Shira playing the leads. The role was the best Ralph had ever had, the part of a young tough who strove to conceal his sensitivity, his hurt pride, by violence of speech and action. Ralph had lived the part for months and he knew that he had it down to perfection.

Ralph had been standing in the wing when the lights of the auditorium winked out. The curtain

went up and the stage was bathed in the glow of dim footlights. That was the moment that Ralph saw Randy in the front row, his face more like Ralph's than ever with the hazy shadows around it. As Ralph stepped onto the stage, he hesitated and all that he could see was Randy's face growing bigger and bigger, the eyes glowing, the lips twisted in a smile. The image receded but it left Ralph shaking, unsure of himself. He'd missed a cue and that was bad. He picked up the lines quick, speaking them automatically, woodenly. The silence of the auditorium was like a tangible thing, reaching out for him, trying to pull him down. He turned back to the audience and took Shira's hands in his as demanded by his role. He could see the puzzlement, the shock on her face. He had to pull himself together, fight to remember his lines, but how could he do it with part of himself out there in the audience, viewing himself through Randy Ames' eyes that were willing him to fail?

At least he didn't go berserk the way he had on the tennis courts. By dint of concentration he got most of his lines straight but all the time he was aware of the figure beyond the footlights, the strange unseen struggle of wills. He was covered with sweat and he could hear his own voice go high-pitched and crack. Every impulse told him to turn, face his tormentor, scream denunciations at him. Only the discipline of the theatre prevented him from making a crazy scene. He stumbled through the first two acts somehow, missing a cue here and there, but getting by. When the curtain raised for the third act, he stared at the front row. The seat Randy Ames had occupied was empty. He pulled himself together after that, even showed a little of his old flair. But it was too late. The cast was demoralized and the show was a fiasco.

Back in his dressing room he'd taken his time cleaning off his grease paint, changing into a tux. He was to meet Shira at the gymnasium for the dance and he wondered how he could face her. The way it turned out that was one thing he needn't have worried about. The dance was in full swing when he edged his way through the door. The dancing couples swirled by him but he only noticed one pair. Shira dancing with Randy Ames. She caught his eye and turned away, whispering something in Randy's ear. Ralph took a step toward them. Randy's gaze passed over him, then he guided Shira into the crowded center of the floor. Ralph stood where he was buffeted by the danc-

ers, torn between the angry desire for a show-down with Randy and the trembling uncertainty that demanded flight.

In the end, he'd gone back into the night. Without conscious volition he'd headed for the town and the darkened curio shop. He'd walked the whole way and, when he got there, there was nothing to see. Just the blank windows of the shop and the pale blur of lights from the apartment above. He'd sunk down on the steps of a recessed doorway across the street, choosing a spot where the black shadows fell across him. His head was aching. He cradled his face in his hands, hunching forward, letting the throbbing pain numb him.

He didn't know how long he remained there. The sweep of headlights along the street and the crunch of tires on the pebbled roadway finally caused him to lift his head. A blue roadster. Randy's car. Parking in front of the curio shop. No one got out right away. Over the purr of the engine, Ralph could hear the tinkle of Shira's laughter. He couldn't catch the words but he didn't need to to know the score. At length Randy got out and circled the front of the car to open the door for Shira. He took her arm as they crossed the sidewalk to the entrance of the house. The shadows there were dark but a dim glow came through the plate glass of the doorway. Enough so Ralph could see the two silhouettes merge together. Randy's face lowered until his lips pressed Shira's. Her arms went about him and her body molded itself against his. Ralph couldn't take any more. He slid out of his own doorway and sidled to the mouth of an alley. The cindered pathway crackled beneath his feet but he didn't turn. When you have no place to go it's better not to look back.

By this time, you'd think he'd know he couldn't win. But with Shira he couldn't throw in the sponge either. For weeks he'd tried to talk with her, hanging around in front of her house, haunting the parts of the campus where she'd be likely to pass, phoning her until her old man threatened to sic the cops on him. As far as Shira was concerned he couldn't as much as buy the time of day. She was through with him. Finished. Besides she was dating Randy Ames every night. When you can have the genuine product, why be bothered with a substitute?

His position was hopeless and he knew it, but still he couldn't leave Shira alone. At nights he'd wander around the city and inevitably he'd land up in the doorway

across the street from the shop. Crazy! Of course it was. But when a guy's in love he does crazy things. He was in the doorway one night when Randy came up on crepe-soled shoes catching him by surprise. Ralph stumbled to his feet, his embarrassment and humiliation drowned out in blind rage.

The upper part of Randy's face was shadowed by the snap brim of his hat, so that all Ralph could see was his tight-lipped smile. His voice was level, reasonable, as though he were talking to a child. He said, "For Pete's sake, Ralph, act your age. You're scaring Shira out of her wits. What's all this skulking around going to buy you?"

Ralph could hear his own voice go shrill. "You took her from me, you bastard. You have to have everything that's mine, don't you?"

"Cut it out, Ralph. Shira was bored with you before I came into the picture. Anyway she's made her choice. What can you do about it?"

Ralph lunged then, his hands leaping forward to grip Randy's throat. If he'd been strong enough maybe he would have killed Randy that night, choked the life out of him, thrown his broken body into the gutter. But Randy was too quick, too strong. Randy's fingers laced about his wrists, holding him for a moment, then flinging him back against the building. Ralph landed with a jolt that knocked the breath out of him. He crouched low, sidling away, making room for the sudden rush that would catch his opponent off balance.

Randy spoke, his voice still easy, "Don't try it, Ralph. You're way out of your class."

Ralph lurched toward him but Randy pivoted on his heel and struck him a glancing blow on the jaw. Ralph started to go down but he caught at Randy's coat and grappled with him. He tried to lash out, drive his fist into Randy's body but it was as though his arm were weighted and the blow was no more than a dull thud against Randy's thick overcoat.

He clung to Randy clumsily. Randy wrenched free and his fist raked the side of Ralph's jaw again, then he drove a hard blow into Ralph's chest. Ralph gasped and his grip loosened. He rolled to the ground. He made a feeble effort to rise but Randy leaned over him, thrust him back.

Ralph looked up and it seemed as though Randy were ten feet high, towering over him. Ralph was helpless against him. You couldn't beat a bigger, stronger, more nearly perfect version of yourself. It was like trying to outrun your shadow. All you could do was exhaust yourself,

whip yourself into a frenzy of frustration.

There was no masking the contempt in Randy's voice now. "Listen to me, you poor slob. You've been treading on my toes too long. From now on keep out of my way. You got that straight, Ralph?"

Ralph didn't answer and Randy reached down and locked his fingers in his shirt, shaking him. "Answer me, Ralph."

The side of Ralph's face struck the base of a wrought-iron railing. He arched backward, moaned and lay still. Randy straightened up. He said, "You're not hurt, Ralph, and you're not fooling me. But I've had all of you I can stomach."

Ralph listened to the soft pad of the crepe soles as Randy strode away. When he finally staggered to his feet, he knew what he had to do. He couldn't fight Randy but he could put enough distance between them so he could live his own life again. He stumbled across town to his own room, crammed all of his possessions he could into a bag, and made straight for the bus station. The first bus out took him to New York. That was good. In a big city like New York you could lose yourself so that Randy Ames could never find you. Yeah, and maybe if you worked at it hard enough you could find yourself too.

Ralph gravitated to Greenwich Village, taking whatever jobs he could find because his old man had cut him off without a dime. He worked as a packer for a wholesaler, clerked in a book shop, was night cashier in a greasy spoon. He never kept any job long because he hated all of them. There was only one thing he really wanted to do and that was act. He made the rounds of the little theatres in the Village and wondered how to establish contacts with the groups. It took him a year to learn the ropes, to edge his way in, to win a small part.

The heat of the footlights was like a tonic to him but even so he realized that his flair was gone, his self confidence shaken. Every time he moved out of the wings and onto the stage, there was a moment of shaking panic. What if Randy Ames should be out there in the audience, watching him, mocking him? Would he be able to go through with his role or would he blow his top again? It was something he'd never know until it really happened.

His climb toward recognition and success was painfully slow but at least there was no backsliding. Roles in a half dozen off-Broadway shows. A couple of seasons in summer stock. A tour with a road com-

pany. A walk-on part in a hit musical. Then, step by step, more important roles. He never got top billing but he caught the eye of the critics. They told him what he already knew. He was good.

As his success grew, his obsession with Randy Ames subsided. Whenever Randy intruded in his thoughts, he'd try to thrust him aside. But it wasn't always easy. Just when he thought he'd forgotten Randy, something would bring him to mind and, try as he would, Ralph could not suppress the aching fear, dread and envy that sprang anew within him. Belated news of Randy kept drifting back to him. Even as an undergraduate Randy had made a name for himself as a disc jockey on the local TV station. Randy had graduated from Avery College with honors. He'd married Shira Bagdalian. He'd been called to Boston on a bigger TV job. Ralph told himself he couldn't care less; Randy was out of his hair and that was all that mattered. All the same the prick of envy was there, the sting of helpless anger.

And Shira, how could you forget her? Sure, there were plenty of dames about but how could you trust any of them when you'd been so mistaken about Shira? There was only one test that really mattered. Would a girl be loyal to him if Randy Ames showed up as a rival? And that was something you couldn't be sure of, not without bringing Randy into the picture again.

Six years. And Randy Ames was crowded into the background, a dim shadow remembered only in moments of uncertainty, of self-doubt. Then suddenly Randy was everywhere. It was one of those miracles that can happen only in the entertainment world. Partly it was luck; partly the skill and craft of a publicity agent. One night Randy was M.C. of a popular TV show in Boston; the next day he was a celebrity. A national pictorial magazine broke the story with a four-page spread. Randy Ames, the boy with the golden voice, the guy who was knocking the dames cold in Boston, the hottest TV personality of the year. Maybe it hadn't been true when the story was run but the magazine had hardly hit the stands before Randy was inundated with offers from Broadway to Hollywood and back again.

Ralph first caught wind of the story just before a Wednesday matinee. The fellow who shared his dressing room slapped the open magazine on the table in front of him.

"Hey, you know you're a dead ringer for this guy except—"

Ralph hadn't heard any more. He was staring at the portrait and a great, dark pit seemed to be taking shape beneath him. He wasn't quite sure whether this was Randy's face, or whether some magic mirror was reflecting his own features, giving them added strength, deeper coloration. Luckily the "on stage" bell rang and he had no more time to think.

In show business anything can happen. In six months Randy Ames became a household name. His TV program was no longer restricted to Boston but was part of a coast-to-coast hook-up. It seemed to Ralph that he couldn't go into a bar or hotel lobby without Randy peering out at him from the television screen, his clear resonant voice filling the room.

The next step for Randy was the motion pictures. He took Hollywood by storm. In a year when the cinema was in the doldrums, Randy became the biggest box office attraction in a decade. Wherever he played, cues formed outside the theatres. Randy Ames fan clubs sprang up all over the country. Pictures of Randy were everywhere. You opened the paper and there he was. You walked along a busy street and his eyes were seeking you out from the display cages of a motion picture house. He even lined his pocket by endorsing a half dozen nationally advertised products. You couldn't open a magazine, ride a subway or glance in a show window without seeing Randy's cheerful open smile.

Randy was riding the crest and each day seemed to add to his laurels. But for each success of Randy's there was a corresponding failure for Ralph. As long as the play in which Ralph had been acting continued its run, the resemblance had been merely an irritant, a source of annoyance. You saw a stranger stop in his tracks and give you the once over. You heard the name Randy Ames whispered as you passed. Sometimes you had to fend off autograph collectors or persuade a drunk in a bar that you weren't Randy. It made you sore, burned you up but you could grit your teeth and take it because you knew you were a real actor and that you'd earned your place on the stage.

Then the show came to an abrupt end and you had to look for a new part. You took your dossier and your glossy prints under your arm and you made the round of the theatrical agencies. And what did it buy you? Nothing. You walked into a crowded casting office and all the young hopefuls would stare up at you, bored at first, then sud-

denly wide-eyed as they spotted you for Randy Ames. Maybe someone would even ask you. But when they'd heard your voice, given you that long hard second look, they'd realize their mistake. The chatter would pick up again and you'd be forgotten, an outsider, because nobody likes being taken in by a cheap imitation.

When you did get in to see a producer or a casting director, it was just as bad. After a while you knew the act by heart. It never varied much. The wagging of heads. The incredulous comments that quickly shifted to wise-cracks. The inevitable comparisons made in your presence as though you were a side-show freak without feeling or sensitivity. You'd think you'd get used to it but it didn't work that way. Your nerves became frayed, worn raw, so that every snide remark hurt you to the quick. You wanted to hurl your portfolio in the grinning smirking faces. You wanted more than that, to go out and find Randy, beat him to a pulp, destroy him, so that no one could ever say again that you were a watered-down version of Randy Ames.

There was no hiding place from the shadow that clung to you. You tried to find escape in the cheap Village bars and sleazy cabarets. It never worked. Pretty soon some dame with too many slugs under her corset would come sidling up to you. "Hey, handsome, you know who I thought you was?"

There was nothing to do then but down your drink and get out quick before you blew your top and started a roughhouse. So you were back on the streets, seeking the shadows, the dark patches of sidewalk, where no one could see your face, where no one would touch your arm to ask if you were Randy Ames.

Months slipped by, grew into a year and still no work. Then came the big break. Or at least that's what it looked like at first. The lead in an historical drama, THE YOUNG KING. Ralph didn't know how he got the role. He seemed to have been picked out of thin air. But why look a gift horse in the mouth? He was in and the play was set for fall production. As soon as he read his lines, Ralph knew he'd bit into a lemon. A real stinkeroo. Nobody who didn't have rocks in his head would ever think this one would make the grade. And yet there were possibilities in the play. The more Ralph studied the script, the more he became aware of them. THE YOUNG KING was so pompous, so over-solemn that it verged on farce. Add some flippant

lines, some music, some pretty girls; shear off the long speeches, the tiresome monologues, substitute light humor and gaiety; then maybe you'd come up with a winner after all.

Sure, Ralph knew all the things to do. But the millionaire backer was the father of the bright young playwright. Ralph could talk his head off. Maybe even score a point here and there. But not enough to save the show. The critics had a ball for themselves vying with one another for bright remarks with which to pan the play. THE YOUNG KING ran for a week, but after the first night the house was mostly paper. Before the week was up you couldn't even hire anyone to sit through the show. You practically had to tie them down with ropes.

So Ralph was out in the cold again, without a job and a failure tag pinned to his button-hole. The play was a flop. So what? That was part of the game. What really griped him was the inevitable comparison between himself and Randy. His skill as an actor was overlooked in his resemblance to America's current glamour boy. The critics tagged him "the poor girl's Randy Ames" and intimated that he deliberately imitated Randy in dress and speech. Each item made Ralph see red. He wanted to strike out, to feel the thud of his fists against flesh. But there were too many targets for his anger, so he had to concentrate his hatred on one person—Randy Ames. But how did you get to Randy when he lived in the rarified air of success?

Another year of pounding the streets, sulking in his room, waiting for the telephone call that would mean a day's work on radio or TV. And each day brought its new reminder of Randy.

By chance, Ralph learned that Randy had been offered the lead in the flopperoo which had been Ralph's nemesis, that he'd not only rejected the part but had suggested Ralph's name. A real generous gesture. Like hell it was. Ralph could see Randy's cynical eyes, his twisted smile. Give the guy a lousy role. Send him to the bottom of the heap. That was what Randy had had in his mind. Killing was too good for the guy.

As if that wasn't enough, Randy made the headlines when he divorced Shira to marry a Hollywood starlet. Sure, Shira had brought the suit but Randy engineered it. Randy playing the gentleman, dumping Shira overboard now that he'd made the big time. When Ralph heard the news, he could feel his throat constrict as he fought back a scream of futile rage. He'd

hurried back to his room, flung himself face downward on his bed, his hands digging into the mattress, his face buried in the pillow while the racking sobs convulsed his body. After awhile he'd calmed down a bit. All these years he'd told himself that he was in love with Shira. Now she was free. Maybe he could go to her, pick up the old relationship where Randy had broken it off. But even as he was working it out in his mind, Ralph knew it was no good. Shira had made her decision long ago. She'd wanted Randy and not him. At best he'd be second choice. He wasn't taking any of Randy Ames' hand-me-downs.

He got up, went to the bathroom and sluiced water across his face. He looked up and caught his own reflection in the shaving mirror attached to the cabinet. Without thinking his fist came looping up, smashing into the glass, destroying the image of the face that was too much like that of Randy Ames. The splintered glass ate deep into the flesh at the back of his hand. Ralph watched the flow of blood in stunned silence. He hadn't accomplished anything by his symbolic act of violence. From without the mirror, Randy continued to stare at him, to mock him. If you wanted to rid yourself of Randy you had to do more than take a poke at a mirror, you had to go out after the guy himself. You had to put him six feet under and stamp the earth down on his grave.

From then on the thought of murder haunted his days and his nights. He walked the streets and the man ahead of him became Randy Ames. All you had to do was pad up behind him, stick a knife between his ribs, then walk away and forget him. What if the man standing beside Ralph on the subway platform should be Randy? A little shove, scarcely more than a nudge and he'd fall screaming beneath the wheels of the incoming train. Try it out, get used to the idea of murder. Then when it comes to the ultimate test you won't panic. You'll be an old hand at the game.

In his saner moments he was appalled at the acts of violence he'd almost committed. He'd have to cool down, cut out his crazy thinking or he'd land up in a straitjacket or the electric chair. Tendrils of fear crawled through him, set his hands to shaking. He'd have to forget about Randy.

Yeah, that was good solid advice he was feeding himself. But how did you go about forgetting Randy when you were mistaken for him half a dozen times a day, when you couldn't land a job because you

looked too much like him? Maybe there was a way. Stop making the rounds of the theatrical agencies. Keep off the streets. Find yourself a hole, crawl into it and pull it in after you. In effect that was what he tried to do. He stopped going out, spent his days in his dreary little apartment on Tenth Street. But escape from Randy wasn't that easy. You lay awake in the darkness and Randy's face came looming over you, his voice echoing throughout the room with its jeering whispers. You tossed and turned but it did no good. Randy's voice, Randy's eyes stayed with you, no matter what you did.

Then just as you were ready to call it quits and were toying with the idea of jumping off Brooklyn Bridge or taking an overdose of sleeping pills, something occurred that you thought could never happen again. You fell in love. Rose Kemp was as different from Shira as a girl could be. She was a willowy blonde, cool, poised, with a soft voice and a delicate beauty.

He scarcely remembered how he arrived at the party where he met her. He'd just been wandering about, making the round of the pubs, when he'd fallen in with a gang he knew. They'd moved along to someone's studio apartment where a party was in full swing. He'd latched onto a drink and picked a lonely corner to stare disconsolately over the milling crowd.

He'd seen her coming toward him, a cocktail glass in her hand. Her eyes had lit up with momentary recognition, then were shaded with doubt. He knew what was coming next; he could have asked the question himself.

"Haven't I seen you before? Oh, I know aren't you—"

He turned away, feeling the constriction in his throat, the pulse of a vein at his temple. He'd like to reach out and throttle her before she could say Randy Ames.

But a miracle happened. The question didn't end the way it always had in the past. "Aren't you Ralph Allen, the man who played the lead in THE YOUNG KING?"

He answered gruffly, not trusting himself to say too much.

"You were wonderful," she told him. "If you'd only had a decent play—" she ended with a little shrug.

Yeah, he thought. If he'd had a hit play, Randy Ames would have snaked it out from under him somehow. In spite of his bitterness, though, he warmed up to the girl. Pretty soon they were chatting like old friends.

A couple more drinks and they left the party. Rose invited him for

a drive. They sped through the city streets in her Jaguar and headed north along the river. Somewhere along the road they parked and, without knowing how it happened, Ralph was pouring out his life story to her, telling her things he'd never spoken of to anyone before in his life.

That's the way it started. After that Rose was always with him. There were dinners in dimly lit foreign restaurants, evenings at the theatre, nights spent in Ralph's apartment that no longer seemed shabby with Rose there to share it. Ralph could feel his manhood returning. He was no longer a shadow, but someone of worth in his own right. Rose had done that for him. But still doubt lingered. What if Rose should meet Randy? Wouldn't he find himself in second place again?

Good luck always seems to run in cycles. First Rose. Then news that THE YOUNG KING was being revived. A team of experts had been brought in to doctor the show. This time it was to be a full-scale musical, an extravaganza, with all the corny scenes dropped out. Just the way Ralph had envisioned it in the beginning. It was bound to be a success and Ralph was right in on the ground floor. This was the big break. He should have known better. Just before the play was to hit the boards, the producer signed Randy Ames for the lead. With Randy the show couldn't fail. Everybody was jubilant except Ralph and he was too stunned to put up a squawk. It wouldn't have done him any good anyhow. Who cared whether or not Ralph Allen got a square deal?

They offered him a sop. Understudy to Randy Ames. A big deal. He should have thrown it in their faces but he couldn't let go. This was the end of the line, his last chance. He knew by instinct that if he threw in the sponge, Rose would be through with him. Besides hadn't he been praying for a chance to get close to Randy? He'd spent enough years as Randy's shadow to be able to afford to wait a while longer, to watch for his chance to even his score once and for all.

The play was rechristened THE PRINCE'S CHARIOT. The first night ended in a standing ovation by the crowd. The critics raved and by morning there was a queue half a block long at the box office. The house was sold out for months in advance. Randy Ames was Broadway's newest fair-haired boy. And what about Ralph Allen? He was out in the wings, watching it all. With murder in his heart.

Ralph's early plans to kill Randy

were nebulous, impractical. A rigged accident. A sandbag falling on Randy. A revolver discharged by mistake. Wait it out and an opportunity will present itself that will be absolutely safe. Nuts to that. Either you were going to kill Randy or you weren't. Make up your mind. You wanted him dead, didn't you? Use your guts and your brains too. Lay your plans carefully, because Randy's no good to you dead if you land up in the electric chair.

The first step was to get friendly with Randy, learn all about him, probe for his vulnerable spots. That wasn't as hard as it seemed. When Randy had first joined the cast he'd made a big show of greeting Ralph like an old friend. The wide grin. The warm handshake. The clap on the back. They all looked genuine. Unless you noticed the slight blankness of the eyes, the amused curl of the lip.

Randy playing the good fellow was something to see. But two could play at the game. Ralph came out of his sulks and began to cultivate Randy. The big hero worship act. Wherever Randy went, Ralph kept him in sight. He'd drop into his dressing-room, manage to bump into him at Sardi's, have a sandwich with him in the drugstore. He even started imitating him, picking up the gestures of his hands, the intonations of his voice, the slight swagger of his walk. He modelled his clothing on Randy's too. Loose-fitting tweed overcoats, hats with a narrow brim. Sweet clothes. The Ivy League type. Because Randy was the perpetual college boy.

Ralph got his reward by being stopped more and more often with requests for Randy's autograph. Even the rest of the cast made the mistake sometimes, going as far as to exchange a few words with him before discovering their error. It was all for laughs, nothing more. But Ralph could see Randy watching him sometimes, a bit speculatively. Better not carry the game too far. When he had the impersonation down to perfection, he let it slide and went to the opposite extreme, exaggerating his own slouch, his tendency to dress carelessly. He got the reaction he wanted. People passed him by without a second look. He was a nonentity again. Ralph Allen.

He learned that Randy lived alone. His second marriage had split up and a divorce was pending. Randy made his home while in New York in one of the towering apartment houses that dotted lower Fifth Avenue. Like all actors, he slept late. He prepared his own breakfast and rarely left his apart-

ment until it was time to show up at the theatre. On afternoons when there was no matinee, he was usually closeted with business associates either in his own apartment or in the offices of the Randy Ames Enterprises. He had no car but taxied wherever he went. Randy was naturally gregarious and, except for breakfast, rarely ate alone.

Over the week-ends, Randy liked to give parties, big noisy ones. Even though Ralph had never been invited he knew all about them. Night after night he'd trail Randy home. He'd located a bar on a side street and picked himself a booth beside a window. From here he had a clear view of Randy's balcony. On warm autumn nights, Randy's guests were like colored dolls silhouetted against the bright lights from the room beyond, moving back and forth across the clear space. After all the rest were gone invariably one girl remained. Never the same girl twice. Why should Randy tie himself down when he had all the girls in the world at his beck and call?

During the first three nights of the week Randy never entertained. Ralph had to do a lot of checking to make sure that this was a pattern and not mere coincidence. But Randy, he learned, was a creature of habit, who operated on schedule. Every night when he entered his apartment, he'd come out on the balcony for a breather. He'd just stand there, hunched forward, his hands resting on the low rail, looking down over the city for five minutes or maybe ten. Ralph, from his vantage point, always had the eerie sensation that Randy knew he was somewhere in the streets below, that he was looking for him, trying to pick out some tell-tale movement that would betray his presence.

A month of watching and waiting, checking and rechecking. Then Ralph had the information that he needed. He knew the time to strike. The place too. But he had to play every angle, make absolutely sure that he was safe. That meant studying the lay-out of the apartment. For that he had to get himself invited to one of Randy's parties. And, despite Randy's display of friendliness, that wasn't likely to happen. Not unless Ralph could dangle something in front of his eyes that would make the invitation worthwhile.

Ralph knew the right bait. Rose. Introducing her to Randy might spell trouble. But Ralph felt certain of Rose. Well, almost certain. They were engaged, planning to be married in the summer. So far Ralph had kept her away from the theatre where she might meet Randy. But

inside himself he knew he'd have to make the test sometime. He'd have to see Rose turn away from Randy, come to him. If he didn't, there'd always be doubt in his mind that she would have chosen Randy if she'd had the chance.

It worked like a charm. Ralph had kept his ears open and learned that Randy would be going to Blackpool's after the Saturday night performance.

He'd met Rose under the marquee of the theatre and they'd walked arm in arm idling through the sluggish night crowds about Times Square. Ralph took his time getting to Blackpool's; he wanted to be sure that Randy arrived first.

Randy was at a back table in the packed nightclub, a crowd around him as usual. Ralph gave him a quick glance, then turned away, edging Rose toward the bar. They hadn't even ordered their drinks when Randy came up in back of them and slipped his arm around Ralph's shoulders. Ralph performed the introduction with a show of grudging reluctance. Then Randy was herding them both to his table. Somehow the seats were shuffled so that Rose was beside Randy and Ralph at the far end.

Soon the party moved on to Randy's place. Ralph tagged along, not specifically invited but not excluded either. The lobby of the apartment house was a danger zone. Indirect lighting flooded it with a brilliant glow. A night clerk looked up from the service desk to greet Randy and a porter stopped his task of mopping the tiled floor to watch the group. Instinctively Ralph shielded the lower part of his face with the collar of his coat but it was a futile gesture. No one was noticing him. All the interest was centered on Randy.

The apartment was large, new, with an unlived in look despite the trophies that Randy had scattered about it. The front room made Ralph think of a stage set that came to life only when the players paraded across its boards and which died again with the drop of the curtain. He noted with wry amusement the symbols of Randy's masculinity —the rusted pistols, a cracked oar wired to the wall, photos of the reigning motion picture queens, suitably autographed. His eyes stopped at the duelling swords crossed above the leather couch. These were no playthings but made of tempered steel, their sharp points catching the glint of refracted light. Ralph knew. Once in his early days in stock he'd handled such a blade.

He turned as a gust of wind struck across him. Randy had

opened the wide double doors of the balcony and stood at the parapet in his accustomed position. Ralph was drawn to the balcony as though by a magnet. He slipped through the open doors to the dark spot by the wall. He stood there trembling. A single push. It would be so easy. And he would be free of Randy Ames forever.

A movement in the doorway distracted his attention. Rose. Randy straightened and wheeled about at the tap of her heels on the concrete flooring. He was laughing as he stepped toward her and his arms reached out as though to embrace her but Rose side-stepped and her hand found the crook of Ralph's arm. Randy was still smiling, his gaze flicking from Rose to Ralph's shadowed face.

Randy was saying something banal about the view but Ralph was absorbed in his own thoughts. Suddenly the night had lost its coldness and he was bathed in a warm glow. For once he knew the sense of victory. Someone had chosen him in Randy's presence. Rose's fingers crept into his palm and she whispered, "Ralph, take me home."

He waited in the vestibule watching as Randy, under the pretext of helping Rose with her stole, leaned forward to speak in her ear. Rose's face remained impassive and she shook her head. A moment later she was beside Ralph. As they left he glanced back over his shoulder. Randy was standing in the center of the room, legs spraddled, something veiled, hooded in the usually clear eyes.

Rose lingered over her goodnight kiss. She said, "I don't think I like your friend, Randy Ames. He's too perfect, almost inhuman. There's something arrogant and cruel about him." There was nothing that Ralph needed to add. Rose was the one person who had seen Randy for what he really was.

When he left her, he was walking on clouds. He passed a bar on the corner. Loud laughter and hearty voices drifted out to him. The impulse to be among his fellow men was strong and he entered and ordered beer. A weight had dropped from him, the burden of an ugly dream. Vengeance was crazy, dangerous too. And now he was no longer alone. He had Rose. He must run no risk of being separated from her.

The rosy glow still enveloped him as he stepped out of the saloon. A cab cruised the lonely night street and he was about to signal when it swerved in toward the lighted marquee of the apartment house where Rose lived. Ralph edged back into the doorway and stood motionless.

Rose hurried through the patch of light beneath the marquee and slid into the cab. Ralph had no doubt where she was going but all the same he had to check. It took him ten minutes to catch another cab. He had the driver drop him a block away from Randy's. He walked the last block slowly until he could look up at the balcony. Two figures moved together against the dim light. Randy and Rose. He didn't wait to see any more.

Murder was no longer a dream, it was a necessity. Only one detail remained to be solved. How soon could he strike?

Sunday was an eternity of restless waiting. Ralph remained in his own rooms, fearful that if he went as far as the street he would be unable to restrain himself from rushing to Randy's apartment and confronting him. That would destroy the plan blue-printed in his mind.

By Monday night when he reached the theatre he had himself under control; he was even beginning to enjoy the role in which he had cast himself. During the first act he watched Randy strutting about the stage, hamming the part that should have been his own. Tomorrow night, he'd have his chance to take over, to show what a real actor could do. Yeah, tomorrow night Randy Ames would make the headlines, his picture would probably be on the front page of the tabloids. But about that time they'd be changing the names spelled out in bright lights above the theatre's marquee.

During the second act the full cast was on stage. Ralph walked in a leisurely fashion through the wings to the line of deserted dressing rooms. Outside of Randy's room he hesitated briefly. It was better not to be seen but even if he were, there were a dozen excuses for entering. Once inside it took him only a moment to find the key ring in Randy's pocket, to disengage the key he needed. He musn't hurry, mustn't appear excited. He moved on down the corridor to the back exit, even stopped for a word or two with the watchman on duty.

He swung off the side-street into Times Square. Weeks ago he'd spotted the counter in the penny arcade where keys were duplicated while you wait; he'd checked to make sure the man was on until midnight. He tossed the key on the glass, forced himself to smile as the garrulous old man went to work with his file. He eyed his watch. The seconds crawled by. Five minutes of waiting can be an eternity.

He was back in Randy's dressing room and had the key safe on its ring while the act was still in full

swing. There was no reason for him to hang around any longer. He'd not be missed if he left immediately. All the same it was best to be seen at the theatre as late as possible. He'd wait until ten minutes before the final curtain. That would give him ample time for what he needed to do. Besides waiting here would be less nerve-wracking than pacing his room. One mistake he mustn't make: he must cause no comment by reaching his destination too soon.

He joined a group of extras during the third act, chatted for awhile, then was on his way. Once started, he moved fast. He caught a taxi to his place and raced up the stairs. He had everything laid out. The topcoat that was a duplicate of Randy's, the snap brim hat, the make-up kit with which to change the tone of his skin and heighten the color of his hair, the contact lenses that made his eyes more blue, the cotton wadding that strengthened the line of his jaw. His skilled hands moved with perfect precision. With action, the dormant fear left him and only excitement remained. Before he left he opened the top drawer of his dresser and took out a small pearl-handled revolver. With any luck he wouldn't need it tonight but it was an added precaution.

He was on his way, glad for the coldness of the night and the whipping wind that gave him an excuse for huddling in his overcoat, walking with his head down. Someone might spot him, take him for Randy Ames; then later on questions might be asked. Perhaps it would be safer to take a cab but you could never tell when you'd get an inquisitive driver. He stopped in front of a drugstore with a high mirror beside the door. He grinned Randy's confident grin and saluted himself. "Hi, Randy," he said softly.

The apartment house lobby would be the zone of maximum danger. As he approached the plate glass door, he forced himself erect, forced a swagger into his walk. He was half way across the lobby before the night clerk looked up. "Cold night, huh, Mr. Ames?"

The voice was going to be the tough part. That and the airy manner. "That's the way I like 'em. I may even take a stroll before I turn in for good."

The words were right, the ones Randy would have used but the tone was pitched a fraction too low. Ralph felt the sweat sprout out on his forehead. But if the clerk noticed anything wrong he gave no sign. He called good-night and turned back to his papers. Ralph strutted to the self-service eleva-

tors. A cage was empty, waiting. He entered and stabbed at the button that would take him to Randy's floor.

He let himself into the apartment with the duplicate key and stood with his back to the door until his eyes grew accustomed to the feeble light. He moved to the couch and his hand sought out one of the crossed swords. He tested its weight, its sharp cutting edge. He'd not been mistaken. This was a lethal weapon.

The door to the balcony was unlocked and it swung free under his hand. He stepped outside and wedged the door open an inch or two. In case Randy should forget his nightly ritual, the cold draft would draw him to the balcony. Ralph took his place in the deep shadows by the wall. There was nothing to do but wait.

So here he was, crouched against the cold, the duelling sword held tight in his hand, reliving the old memories, the old hurts adding fuel to the flame of hatred that burned within him.

He missed the snick of the key in the lock and the first warning that he had that Randy was in the room was the sudden glow of lights spilling out on the balcony. His breath caught and he pressed closer against the wall. Randy's footsteps were light in the room. They stopped. A minute passed, then they sounded again.

Ralph peered through the crack in the door. Randy's back was toward him and he was walking away. His hand raised to the switch and darkness came to the room. Did Randy suspect an intruder? Was he going for help? Ralph watched, expecting the hall door to open but no light showed. He shifted his position but the darkness was like a curtain.

The door to the balcony was moving, pushing slowly, steadily outward until the doorway was a frame with an indistinct figure just behind it. But the voice that spoke was light and clear, with a mocking undertone.

"You've come to kill me, haven't you, Ralph? I wondered if you'd ever get up the nerve to try."

It was like it had always been in the past. Randy, the man. Ralph, the imperfect counterpart. Two parts that formed a whole, yet made each incomplete in itself.

Ralph felt the sword loose in his hand and whipped it upward. His knee flexed for the lunge, then he saw the glint of steel at Randy's side.

"You can't stop now."

He couldn't be sure whether the voice that mocked him was his own

or Randy's, but the words made him wary, and he sidled away.

Randy remained motionless but now there was no doubt that he was speaking. "We can't go on like this, can we, Ralph? One of us has got to die. A man can't live with two shadows, never quite knowing which is genuine, which is spurious. You've always hated me, haven't you, Ralph? And how do you think I've felt about you? You've begrudged me every success. So what was I to do? Did I have to fail, did I have to become something less than you, not to be blamed for your failure? Sure, I'm Randy Ames, the boy who's got everything he ever wanted in life. But somehow you always managed to spoil it, Ralph, to turn the taste of victory to ashes. Did you know I dropped out of my fraternity in college? Why? Because somehow I got the blame for cutting you out, even though I never wanted it that way. What about tennis? To me it was a game. You had to turn it into a fight, blow your top and make fools of both of us. So what fun was left in it for me? Shira? Sure it was me she loved and not you. But you were always between us. I'd beaten you up, driven you away from college. That was what Shira remembered. Not that you attacked me first. Not that Shira was sick of you before I came along."

He shouldn't let Randy keep on talking, Ralph told himself. Randy was near enough to the parapet so that a single side-step would carry him over. Drive in hard, fast. Don't give him a chance. Only he couldn't do it. His knees were weak and his hand clumsy and somewhere deep inside of him a sob was rising. He'd missed some of Randy's words but now he heard them again.

"Always you were there in the wings, waiting for me to make a slip, asking everyone to be sorry for you. Ralph Allen, the guy who never got a break, because they all went to Randy Ames. So I'm a perpetual heel with no right to a life of my own."

Ralph had to strike now. He couldn't take any more. He raised the sword and thrust it forward. It rang against steel as Randy parried the blow. Randy stepped out of the doorway and his blade curved upward like liquid fire, licking at Ralph's wrist. Ralph crouched low and brought up the sword in a looping arc. Randy's weapon dipped downward, then slapped hard against Ralph's forearm. Then Randy was moving in, forcing Ralph back and back toward the low railing of the balcony. The small of Ralph's back touched the low iron guard-rail. In panic, he rolled for-

ward and his sword fell to the concrete with a clang of metal. Randy's blade flicked at his chest.

Ralph rolled farther away and staggered to his feet. He clutched at his pocket and the revolver was in his hand, his finger tight on the trigger. The edge of the sword slashed across his wrist, numbing it. The gun thudded at his feet. He clutched his wrist and then looked up to meet Randy's eyes.

Randy held the sword loosely but he was moving slowly toward Ralph, crowding him backward, step by step. Ralph tried to scream but no sound came. The parapet gaped behind. He wanted to turn, to see his danger, but he couldn't remove his eyes from Randy's face. He could only back away.

He crumpled against the railing, his arms linked about the iron bar. Then Randy was lifting his feet, hoisting him over the rail. Ralph's arms twisted until he heard the snap of a bone. He clutched out wildly, fingers clinging to the concrete stanchion. Flesh scraped against the rough surface. Then he was over the rail, falling, falling into darkness.

The black shadow fell before they'd become one, the man and the shadow. But in that last moment, Ralph saw Randy's face and he knew that even his own hatred, his murderous anger, had been no more than cheap counterfeits, blurred carbons of the consuming rage that festered inside Randy Ames.

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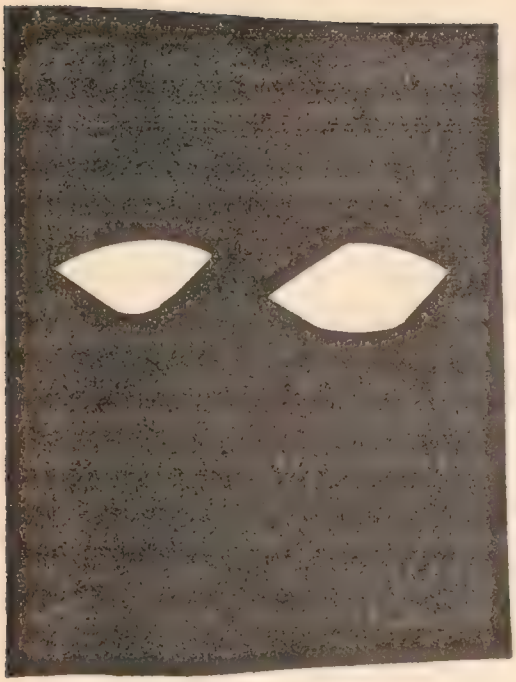

DEAD OR ALIVE

by EVELYN PAIGE

Tangerine and purple rays interspersed with slow-moving gray shadows played around the trees and the buildings, as the sun gave up its task for the day. Dusk fell and an aura of mystery enveloped the farm which still showed no lamplight. A closer look revealed the truth. The farmhouse, the bath, the outhouse, the land all sagged with a shame-faced countenance. Everything reeked of hopelessness . . . of resignation. This was also true of the woman who, like the farm, looked twice her age.

Her voice was a monotonous drone with a whisper of a whine when she answered her visitor. "You know me and my boy can't afford 'tendin' social functions, Sheriff Blane."

"But Liza, I also know it's not fittin' for a young woman like you to bury yourself this way. And it's time for Buddy to be startin' school. When no one in town seen you, they sent me out to check up."

"You can't fool me, Fred Blane . . . there ain't anyone in town concerned about the family of a criminal."

"Liza, Liza, you got friends, if you'll only give 'em a chance." Sheriff Blane realized he was dealing with a proud, stubborn woman, but he'd promised a few townfolk

he'd try to bring her back to the living. "No one blames you for trying to help Ben escape when he was wanted by the law . . . you stood by him like any good wife would 'of. But that was seven years ago and Ben couldn't get no more punishment than he's given himself."

She was bitter inside, but her voice came out gentle-like. "I helped him before I knowed what he done. Is it true, then, Sheriff? Is he still roamin' 'round in the hills?"

Sheriff Blane told her all he knew about her fugitive husband—which wasn't very much. There were many signs that Ben was still alive. Although it was a puzzle to them all how he managed to survive the winters. Ben had built no shelter that could be found. Since he hadn't taken his rifle when he fled the law, they didn't know how he found enough to eat. "But some day, Liza, he'll come walkin' in."

Her grief strained through her voice when she spoke again. "You'll think me mean and bold, Sheriff, and it's a sinful thing to say, but it's what I'm thinking. I wish he could be found . . . found dead. That's the only way he could make up to Buddy and me for all the heartache." She didn't even hear the Sheriff's question. In a voice now barely loud enough to be heard, she continued. "It's all I hope and pray for . . . his death! Then Buddy and me, we'd be rich from the insurance money."

The Sheriff forced himself to finish the weak tea Elizabeth could afford to serve. "If you moved into town, Liza, you and the boy might be happier and more comfortable. Why, there's plenty of empty places we could fix . . ." Even as he was saying it, the Sheriff knew it was the wrong way to put it. Elizabeth didn't give him a chance to finish.

"We ain't gonna live off charity, Fred Blane, and there ain't no point in talking more. No one in his right senses would buy this farm, but leastways it keeps me and the boy from starving."

And Elizabeth meant what she said for the Sheriff soon discovered that he might as well have been talking to a stone wall. When he left, he didn't even know if she was aware of it.

Buddy was used to his mother's days of silence. There were times when he suspected she didn't even know he was around. He automatically performed his daily chores, and in-between spent many hours searching for the father he had never known. This day was an event, though, his mother was baking a pie and he'd been quietly watching her.

Elizabeth Jennings pushed the bowl of berries out of her son's reach. He waited expectantly. Anyone watching would have guessed that he knew exactly what she was about to say. In her thin, tired voice, she patiently explained, "I'm tellin' you again, Buddy, like I gotta tell you every Spring, it seems . . . these berries ain't fit fer eatin'. I'm usin' 'em to get rid of the vermin around here."

A rare spark came into Buddy's eyes as an idea hit him. "Say, Ma, maybe I kin use 'em for hunting, since you won't let me use the rifle, huh? I could maybe set 'em out to catch rabbits and . . ." His voice trailed off and the spark disappeared from his eyes . . . "Gee, Ma, would they make the rabbits not fit for eatin' then?"

His mother continued her useless scouring in trying to make her old-fashioned kitchen gleam. "You oughtta know animals are smart that way, Buddy . . . they'd know enough not to eat poisoned plants. 'Sides, you forget about hunting and save your energy for the farm. I need you close to home. Git along now, son, it's time for your barn chores and wood-choppin'."

In the doorway, Buddy turned to make an exciting announcement. "Looks like we're gettin' company, Ma. A man's comin' up the road . . . kin I stay, Ma? In case he stops by? Maybe it's Pa, huh? Do you think maybe it is?" He knew before she shooed him off what her answer would be. As he walked off reluctantly, he couldn't see her bitter expression.

Conserving the oil in the lamp until the last moment, Elizabeth finally lit the wick. She watched the flickering shadows form weird shapes around her as she waited for the approaching man. Her heartbeat increased, for the figure was strange and yet familiar. All the struggling, aching years had given Elizabeth more courage than most women had. Even so, as the stranger came closer, she took down the rifle. It was the only item on the farm that gleamed . . . for reasons only Elizabeth knew, she kept it polished, oiled and loaded.

The man hesitated before turning onto the path leading to the weary-looking farmhouse. His voice reached the doorway ahead of him. It was a well-mannered, well-educated voice that asked if he might draw some water from the well. For the first time in several minutes, Elizabeth relaxed, but was silent until he appeared in the doorway. Her pulse throbbed again and she had to hold back the scream that was ready to erupt. She reached forward with one hand and held

firmly onto the edge of a chair as she bent forward peering into his face. "Ben . . . is it really *you!*"

The man moved closer so the light fell fully on him. He apologized for startling her and introduced himself. "I'm afraid you've mistaken me for someone else, Ma'am."

Although the color was still drained from her face and her voice was higher pitched than usual, Elizabeth slowly regained her composure. "Maybe it wuz 'cause we just talked of him not a minute ago that made me think you're him." She stared searchingly at the stranger. "No, wuzn't only that . . . you *do* look just like him. My husband, that is. Only he'd be thinner . . . bound to be thinner . . . living like an animal." Not knowing her, the stranger couldn't recognize the hysteria creeping into Elizabeth's voice, but he did move back nervously.

As the words kept tumbling out of Elizabeth's mouth, she seemed to raise her rifle slightly. The stranger apparently had faced more dangerous situations and he interrupted her flow of words. He did have respect for the pointed rifle, however, and stayed where he was. "I can assure you, Ma'am that I'm *not* your missing husband." With that, Elizabeth lowered her rifle and the man continued with more confidence. "I'm only looking for a little work. Not too much, you understand. Just enough to keep me going."

Elizabeth was unhearing and rambled again. "No, you sure ain't him . . . not with those city manners . . . but you sure enough give me a start, mister, I gotta admit it." She put the rifle back in its place on the wall. "There's no need to hold this here gun on you, though. The ain't nothin' here worth stealin', mister." Forgetting she wasn't alone as usual, she voiced her thoughts in a whispered tone. "I wonder now, if it'd been Ben, if I could of shot him. It's bin so long since I seen him, I coulda claimed I took him fer a stranger."

The man who actually was a stranger still waited. Elizabeth finally came out of her reverie. It was as if his words were floating around and found their way toward her. "I'm real sorry, mister, but I ain't got money to pay for any work . . . though Lord knows I kin use a man's strong hands around here. We ain't got much, but you're welcome to a bite of food."

The stranger was gratefully eating everything Elizabeth put in front of him. He finally slowed down and began a conversation that flowed into a monologue. As with her son, the woman didn't respond

to the man's chatter. Elizabeth was accustomed to being silent for days and nights and she had already spoken more than was her custom. She did listen, though, as he explained how he'd given up living in the city to roam about the countryside. He proudly flexed his muscles and confided that he used to be an ailing man. "Now, I'm strong as an ox . . . often as not, I sleep under the open sky. I had always longed for the wide-open spaces, and when I was a youngster, I wanted to live on a farm. Changed my mind, though and now I like moving about."

Elizabeth broke in only once. "What about your family . . . your wife?"

The stranger, silenced momentarily, looked warily at her "Why do you ask? What makes you think I have a wife?"

Elizabeth was puzzled at his change in manner. She didn't really want him to get angry and leave. She was enjoying his ramblings, but it was hard for her to remember how to communicate with company. She floundered and then told him that it seemed only natural for a fine-looking man to have taken himself a wife.

His face was still clouded. "I have no obligations . . . no one to order me around any more. You are right about one thing. There was a wife. A nagging, wretched excuse for a wife. But that's over with now . . . she's dead. I can do what I please and go where I please." And with this, his good humor returned and he grinned at Elizabeth. "Of course, sometimes I also go a little hungry . . . but generally there's work for a willing man."

This reminded the stranger to offer his services in payment for the food. Elizabeth refused. She admitted that there was too much that needed doing. And she wouldn't know where to set the task. The fence needed rebuilding, the roof needed major repairs . . . "No, thanks all the same, mister, but me and my son—we take care of the farm by ourselves."

The stranger asked the woman why she remained on the bleak farm. She told him she was waiting. "And fer a minute there when you arrived, mister, I thought my waitin' was over with."

He asked her about fear for herself and her boy . . . being so far from town.

Elizabeth laughed . . . not a happy laugh . . . it was a short sound, more of a snort. "Nobody'd want anything we got . . . we don't have enough of anything worth stealing. The cow's so old, she prob'ly couldn't even make it down

the road. My chickens're so scrawny, it hurts to set your eyes on 'em. No, mister, we got no reason to be scared."

"But isn't it lonely for you and the boy?"

"It don't matter much, mister. 'Sides, some day, they'll find my husband dead and then we'll be rich from the insurance money."

The stranger offered his thanks for her hospitality and started to leave. His eyes lit on the picturesque bowl of berries and, before Elizabeth could stop him, he boyishly popped several in his mouth. While relishing them, he said enthusiastically: "I've always loved freshly picked berries."

She automatically reached over to push the berries away. But she did nothing. She watched him eat another and then another. Then, as Elizabeth tried to convince herself later, it was as if another voice took control over hers. In a low voice, almost an inaudible voice, she suggested that he have them all. He refused in a well-mannered way, because he thought he ought to, but was obviously anxious to accept her offer. She told him . . . truthfully . . . that neither she nor her boy ever ate them and they'd only be used for the barn.

The stranger left, alternately thanking her, stuffing his mouth with the berries and saying good-by.

Elizabeth had pangs. But the first surge of hope in many years overcame her guilt feelings. She could still hear his dreadful words about his wife. She rationalized that a man talking about a dead wife that way wasn't the kind of person a body could have feelings for. And, if she'd mistaken him for Ben, surely everyone else would. For the first time in seven years, Elizabeth hummed a song . . . the tune was familiar, but the lyrics about collecting insurance were her own creation.

The stranger's body wasn't found until the next morning. When the Sheriff was telling Elizabeth about it, he worried over the high flush standing out in her normally pale cheeks. "Now, take it easy, Liza. Maybe me and the doc're wrong. He's a dead ringer for Ben . . . there's no doubt about it, but we'll need your official identification."

The farmer who had found the body was still at the doctor's house and, by the time the Sheriff brought Elizabeth in, several neighbors had gathered. They clucked sympathetically and opened a path for her.

She was no master at subterfuge. She did manage her part well, though, as she secretly convinced herself . . . temporarily, at least

. . . that she did what she did because she had to. "That's him, Sheriff . . . there's no mistaking my Ben. He looks just like he looked the day he run off." Elizabeth's tears were real when she claimed the dead man to be her husband. No one knew that they were not tears of sorrow . . . rather they were tears of relief.

The funeral wasn't too well attended. In fact, aside from the doctor, the Sheriff, the priest and the grave-digger, there was only Elizabeth and her son. They were all silent as the prayers were being intoned. It was not out of respect for the dead man who had been hunted by the law for seven years . . . for the man who had cruelly beaten his first-born to death while in a temper . . . for the man who had often beaten his wife when drunk. No, it was only that these people were generally silent and generally showed respect on a somber occasion.

The first to speak after the ground was leveled off was Elizabeth. "Will Buddy and me have to wait long to get the insurance money?"

It was the doctor who gave her reassurance. "We all know how in need you are, Liza. Don't fear, we'll get it for you right off."

It was Buddy—eight-year-old Buddy who started the first gnawing fear in Elizabeth. "I still don't believe it was my Pa. Else whyn't he come looking to see me." It was the hurt voice of a little boy. "Any Pa would've wanted to see his son."

Elizabeth kept her voice calm. "Like I told you, Buddy. He prob'ly changed his mind about comin' in at all." The fear expanded within and she was sure her next breath would never come.

The Sheriff put his arm around the boy's shoulders in a comforting gesture. "I guess we'll never really know the answer, Buddy. Just like we'll never know for sure if it really was your paw."

Elizabeth didn't dare face the Sheriff. There was a long, loud silence which no one seemed to know how to shatter.

The doctor spoke up finally. "I guess we're all thinking the same thing. If that was Ben, he should've known enough to leave the Spring's first batch of berries alone. Everyone around these parts knows they're poisonous. And if it was Ben, he's finally paid for his crime and now Liza and the boy'll have money for their needs."

And so they all left . . . all wondering . . . all except Elizabeth. She knew.

When the Insurance adjuster picked up all his papers that Eliza-

beth Jennings had signed, he carefully counted out the five hundred dollars onto the worn table. He said all the proper things that properly needed saying and carefully set his hat straight. Elizabeth remembered her manners and offered him tea and was grateful when he declined saying he couldn't spare the time.

Her few belongings had been packed since the funeral and she was now ready to leave. Buddy, accustomed to accepting her word as authority, didn't question her decision to move away. There was no one to say farewell to and they left.

The Sheriff confided only in the doctor. "I got to thinking real hard about it, Doc. It was easy for us all to think that was Ben. Liza wasn't lyin' when she said that was the way he looked the last day we seen him. But that's the whole point of it. How could a man livin' in the hills for seven years stay so healthy looking? He oughtta've of been skinny and had a full-grown beard 'stead of a stubble. And the more I got to thinkin' about it, the more it seemed that only a city man would of eaten those berries."

"That bothered me too, Blane. But the man looked as much like Ben as any man could look like his twin brother."

"Well, Doc, I checked with the city authorities. Seems there was a man wanted for murdering his wife . . . he disappeared only a week before we held Ben's funeral . . . and his description could match Ben's any day. Now we'll never know, will we, Doc? Not unless old Ben shows up some day. But there was one real big difference between those two wanted men. Ben's death brought Liza five hundred dollars, but this other man . . . brought in alive would have paid her a reward of twenty-five hundred dollars."

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CONSPIRATORS' PARADISE

by JEAN-ETIENNE ST. LO

The much publicised replacement of General Massu as Commander of the Algiers region by ex-Poujadist General Jacques Faure, an old friend of the diehards among the European settlers, illustrates the contradictions in the life of the region journalists are beginning to call "plotters' paradise", a region as complicated as its population and which has averaged one spectacular plot every year for the past four years—not to mention the little local conspiracies.

The "ultras", the die-hard Algerian-born Europeans dedicated to keeping Algeria French, have shouldered to one side European liberals and Algerian nationalists in Algiers' already much too crowded underworld of illegal or quasi-legal political organizations,—an underworld peopled by terrorists and counter-terrorists, Socialists, Communists (all varieties), Fascists (including those mourning the golden days of the Petain regime), Corsican nationalists and smugglers, Spanish Republicans and Franco agents keeping a somewhat less than fatherly eye on these indestructible survivors of the Thirties, the predominantly right-wing and authoritarian minded police "welfare" groups and the small band of liberal police, the student organizations and the assorted Catholic and Protestant groups of intellectuals owing allegiance to some or none of the already cited ideologies.

All this makes for a certain amount of confusion if you suscribe to the theory that there are no political colors save black and white, and that the world is made up simply of the saved and of the sinners.

This—while it would make for a much simpler world—is unfortunately not so, and is why you cannot generalize about ambitions and counter-ambitions (which have a

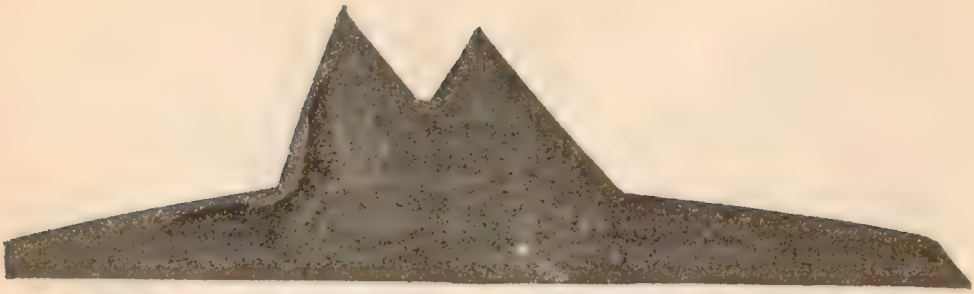
tendency to shift anyway) in North Africa, and, for that matter, in the recently embattled Algiers, scene of the recent gesture of defiance of the "ultras".

Who were the chief actors?

Bony, red-bearded Pierre Lagaillarde wore his paratroop uniform as he stormed the Government Buildings at the head of his fellow students in May of 1958, and he wore battledress once more during the latest insurrection—and when he issued passes, honored by the blockading army, to followers who wanted to spend the night at home. . . . At twenty-nine, Lagaillarde was one of the youngest members of the French National Assembly, where his speeches were infrequent, reflecting the "ultra" viewpoint that DeGaulle's policies in Algeria were a betrayal of the interests of France. The views of his parents, both lawyers, are not known.

The other "insurgent" chief, who disappeared the night before the surrender, is as tough and outspoken as Lagaillarde, but less flamboyant. As I write this I am looking at a photograph of the always correctly dressed Ortiz, seated at a desk, facing a group of rebels in Home Guard uniform in the insurrection headquarters,—an aide behind him with a cocked machine gun, aimed at the seated men. Ortiz, now reported dead (he obviously does know too much), being sheltered by a friendly policeman in Algiers, or enroute to Cairo to negotiate with the Algerian nationalists, was the organizer, in November of 1958, of the French National Front. He claimed an active membership of 14,000, mostly from among the poor white element from which he himself stemmed. He had a strong following among the Algiers Home Guard.

Figures in the background included the ex-Petainist Count Alain de Serigny, owner, with his wife, of the influential *Echo d'Alger*, and squat bespectacled Maître Biaggi, a barrister who likes to surround himself with former paratroopers (one of his bodyguards is known as the "Black Angel"). Maître Biaggi protests that his arrest is quite illegal. Tall, stooping, professorial Count de Serigny, who had called on Deputy Premier Soustelle to save France, was a well known figure in the French National Assembly. Add also French Army officers, avowedly close to the insurgents, and in a position to influence the thinking of the French Army,—and you begin to get a *slight* idea of the problems faced by DeGaulle in Paris as he had to decide between these men—and the interests of France.



DETECTIVE SCHOOL

by JOHN L. HAYWARD

Chuck Harrison tilted his Stetson back on unruly hair and scowled at the vanishing sun. "Well, Pop," he said to his older companion. "I guess that's about it. A nice, fat blank."

Sheriff Wheeler wagged his head solemnly, tugged at his ear. "Tain't your fault, Chuck. A bloodhound couldn't find a footprint on this ground."

"I wish we had one," his young deputy said wryly. "I'd like to try it." He looked gloomily around the farmyard. "Too bad we didn't have another half hour or so of light."

Half an hour—or half a day—it wouldn't make much difference, he reflected. This was going to be a tough one to crack. And unless they had some luck, the weren't even going to come close. He frowned at the blanket covered body that lay between them and the sheriff's battered station wagon.

"We've only been on it a couple of hours," Sheriff Wheeler pointed out cheerfully. "We'll come up with something—the way you go about it."

Chuck wished he shared the old man's confidence. Behind that serenity, Chuck knew, lay an almost childlike faith in the FBI training school from which Chuck had just returned.

Pop could afford to be cheerful. He figured on retiring this Fall. Chuck wanted to be the next sheriff, mostly because of Pop's daughter, Sally. Trying to support a wife—and maybe a couple of kids—on a deputy's salary didn't appeal to Chuck.

Right now, things didn't look good. The man under the blanket was Tom Bishop. And Tom had been as popular a man as you could find in the County. If this case went unsolved, the chances were that neither Chuck nor Pop would be sheriff next year.

It was murder—there wasn't any doubt about that. Skull crushed by a frontal blow, the weapon—a long length of firewood as thick as your arm—tossed aside. No chance of fingerprints on its rough surface.

Practically no blood, either. That was bad, because it cut down the possibility of finding telltale spatters on the suspect's shoes or trousers.

The ground was packed down—shiny hard. No footprints—no tireprints. The farmyard wasn't visible from the highway so it wasn't likely that any witness would enter into the case.

The hell of it was, both he and Pop had a good idea who the killer might be. Jud Barlow was the logical suspect. Jud lived in an old cabin a few miles away, on the edge of the swamp. There'd been talk lately that Jud had been sneaking around the Bishop farm. It figured, because Barlow was a big uncouth brute of a man and Tom had a teen aged daughter who was pretty as a picture—and was about half there.

This was a Saturday and ordinarily Tom would have gone into town, leaving Betty at the farm. He was sensitive about the girl acting a little foolish. Today, though, his neighbors, the Sanders, had come by and taken Betty to town with them, volunteering to do Tom's shopping. They'd picked up the girl about two o'clock and returned at five—to discover the murder.

Chuck sighed, picked up his investigator's kit and walked over to the station wagon. He was putting the kit away when the coroner's converted sedan came roaring down the lane and pulled into the yard.

Doc Lawton got out and came over. He was a small, stocky man, perpetually perspiring. He walked with a bounce, as though he had springs in his heels.

"Hello, Chuck. Hello, Pop," he greeted them, mopping his face with a damp white handkerchief. "Got here as soon as I could. Gosh, gosh! This is a terrible thing, isn't it. That poor girl! What's going to happen to her?"

"Tom has relatives up North," Sheriff Wheeler said. "I reckon they'll look after her."

"I hope so," Doc said, sighing. "It'd be a shame if she had to go to an institution."

"Might be better off there," Pop observed. "Likes of some you find around."

Doc Lawton's brown eyes glittered. "You think—" his voice trailed off, but his plump face was expectant as he looked from the sheriff to the young deputy.

Chuck frowned his annoyance. Trouble with Pop—sometimes he talked too much—and at the wrong time. "We aren't ready to make any accusations," he told Doc. He started over toward the converted sedan. "I'll give you a hand."

"Oh, sure," the coroner said quickly and came bouncing over to help with the stretcher.

Doc's round face tightened when he saw the ghastly wound inflicted on the dead man. "Hanging's too good for whoever did that," he muttered darkly. "Much too good!"

With the sun behind the mountain, a purplish haze spread across the valley. The air took on a quick chill. A pickup truck came down the lane and swung into the farmyard.

"Sanders," Pop observed. "He said he'd see to the stock."

Chuck walked over and said hello to the neighboring farmer. "I wonder if you'd be careful about walking around—especially near the woodpile and shed?" Chuck requested.

"Sure," Sanders promised, nodding emphatically. "Find anything?"

The sheriff started to reply, but Chuck said quickly, "Not much."

Sanders and Doc Lawton exchanged significant looks. Obviously, Chuck thought, they figured he and Pop *had* found something, and wanted to keep it under wraps. Which was just as well. It wouldn't help to have it get around that they hadn't found a single clue pointing toward the killer.

"You coming back to town?" the coroner wanted to know, as he wedged his bulk behind the wheel of his sedan.

"Not right away," Chuck said, and let it go like that.

Sanders took a lantern from his pickup truck and plodded sturdily toward the barn. Chuck wrapped the murder club in newspaper and stowed it away with his kit. He and Pop climbed into the station wagon, Chuck taking the wheel.

"Yessir," Pop said complacently, as they drove down the lane. "You sure went about things with a lot of knowhow. There's nothing like proper schooling."

"A fat lot of good it did there."

When he turned off the highway to go by Jud Barlow's place, Sheriff Wheeler evidenced no surprise. Two lean and hungry looking hounds growled menacingly as they pulled up in front of the shack. Jud, a big, lumbering giant of a man appeared in the lamplit doorway to bellow at the dogs. They slunk back into the shadows of the porch.

"Like to chin with you, Jud," Chuck said.

"Sure," Barlow agreed, his voice friendly enough. He led the way inside.

The cabin was fairsized and spotted with rough, handmade furniture. Traps hung from every convenient peg. Flames licked idly at a log in the stone fireplace. A small, wood burning stove stood in one corner and the gamy, but not unpleasant odor of cooking rabbit filled the room.

"We'd like to know where you spent the afternoon, Jud," Chuck said, once they were seated.

Barlow had taken a hide covered chair near the fireplace. He stretched out his stocking feet and grinned through a whisker stubble. "Down in the swamp—most of it," he said. "Why? You figure on pinning Tom Bishop's killing on me?"

"You heard about it, then?" Pop said.

Jud waved a big hand at the telephone on the wall. "Party line," he said. "You hear everything. I was trying to get ahold of Sid—to have him send me out some flour with whoever might be going by—and I heard Emmy Hackett telling her sister about it."

"Those the clothes you had on today?" Chuck asked, nodding at a pair of khaki pants and a hunting jacket slung over a chair.

Barlow nodded. Pop and Chuck went over to look. Chuck examined the mud spattered trousers and the sheriff inspected the coat.

"Anything on that, Pop?" Chuck asked finally, tossing the pants over the chair again.

Sheriff Wheeler shook his head and dropped the coat. "Clean as a whistle," he admitted, regret in his voice.

"Where are your shoes?" Chuck asked the trapper.

"Out on the porch," the big man said, his voice sullen, now. He came out and watched while Chuck painstakingly scraped the mud from each shoe into clean white envelops. "Real scientific!" he jeered.

"Chuck's been to FBI School," Pop said, pride in his voice.

"I don't care where he's been!" the big man growled. "Anybody can tell that's swamp mud just looking at it!"

When Chuck had finished, there was an uncomfortable silence.

"Anything else you want?" Barlow demanded.

"No, I guess not," Chuck said stiffly. "We appreciate your cooperation, though."

"You're welcome," Barlow said, the growl still in his voice. "I got nothing to hide. You fellows pick up any leads yet?"

"Not yet," Pop admitted, apparently not seeing Chuck's warning glance. "Got dark on us. We're going to try it again tomorrow."

"Well, I sure wish you luck," Barlow said, trying to get friendliness into his voice. "I can't imagine anybody wishing Tom Bishop any harm. You couldn't find a nicer fellow than Tom."

"That's the way just about everybody feels about it," Chuck said shortly. "Goodnight, Barlow."

"So long, men. If I can do anything to help, let me know. I'm pretty good at reading sign."

"We'll holler," Pop promised amiably. "Night, Jud."

On their way into town, Pop asked about the shoes. "I been able to figure out everything you did, except that," he said, pulling at his ear, "but I sure don't know what you wanted with that mud!"

"That swamp runs pretty close to the Bishop place," Chuck explained. "If he went through the swamp to get there, we might find some chips from the woodpile mixed up with the mud."

Sheriff Wheeler wagged his head in obvious admiration. "Now, I'd never thought of that in a million years! You can't beat schooling—nohow!"

Chuck was tempted to tell Pop that there were some things you could learn without going to school—like keeping your mouth shut about a case until you had it in the bag. There wasn't any use hurting the old man's feelings, though. When you got right down to it, there wasn't much harm in telling Barlow they didn't have any clues. You couldn't hurt a case, when you didn't have one.

Pop insisted that Chuck have dinner with him and Sally. Which was fine, except Chuck didn't feel up to par. What he really wanted to do was to go down to the office and see if he could find any wood chips or splinters in the mud he'd scraped from Jud's shoes.

Sally noticed his glum face right away and asked him to come into the kitchen and open up a new can of coffee. She sneaked him a kiss instead and in spite of himself, his hands started traveling around to places they had no business to be. Sally pushed him away, her face

flushed and her breath coming kind of fast.

"You know what," she said, a tremor in her voice. "I think we'd better get married—real soon!"

Chuck's face fell again.

"Oh, oh," Sally said. "Just as I thought, your intentions are slightly less than honorable."

"Aw, you know better than that," Chuck said.

"Do I?"

"Well, you should."

"Maybe I would—if you were a little more enthused about getting married and a little less—" her voice trailed off.

"I'll be good," he promised.

"Who asked you to?" she demanded, slipping her arms around his neck and pulling his head down. She kissed him fiercely.

"Hey!" Pop's voice came from the living room. "What's with supper?"

Chuck helped her carry in the plates, flushing to his ears when the sheriff drawled, "Kinda warm in the kitchen, ain't it?"

"Now tell me what the trouble is," Sally commanded, when they were seated at the table. "You didn't find any clues—is that it?"

"Not yet," Pop admitted readily, busy with a chicken leg. "Haven't been at it long, though."

"That's what I can't understand," Sally said, frowning at Chuck, who ate in silence, his face downcast. "It just happened this afternoon. You couldn't expect to solve it right away."

"Chuck's afraid we're never gonna catch up with the killer," Sheriff Wheeler said cheerfully. "And the reason he's so worried is because he figures the voters ain't gonna elect him this Fall—when I retire."

"I'll quit then," Chuck growled. "Who can support a family on a deputy's pay?"

"Some people won't even try," Sally said, her voice provoked.

"Smart people," Chuck returned.

"But not smart enough to solve a murder—is that it?" Sally asked sweetly.

"Quit squabbling!" Pop ordered, when Chuck opened his mouth to reply. "Taint fitten. Wait'll you get hitched. Anyway, Chuck has a trick or two up his sleeve. Tell her about the mud, son."

"Like Jud said," Chuck told him sulkily, "you can tell by looking at it—it's nothing but swamp mud."

"Maybe so," Pop admitted, without disappointment. He wiped his mouth carefully on the paper napkin. "You know, Chuck, I never had a case just like this—nothing to go on, I mean—and I don't think we should pass up any bets."

"Like what?" Chuck asked.

Pop squirmed a little. "Well, how about us staking out at the Bishop's place—a little before daylight—and see who comes prowling around?"

Chuck choked on his coffee, coughed into his napkin. "The murderer will return to the scene of his crime—is that it?" he asked finally, his voice strangled.

"He might," the sheriff said, his face a little red. "I recollect in this mail order course I took—he stopped when he saw the expression on Chuck's face and added, stiffly, "I know a mail order course don't compare to that FBI school, but—well, anyway, it won't do no harm."

"Don't see how it could," Chuck agreed. He was kind of ashamed of himself. After all, Pop couldn't have treated him nicer if he'd been a son.

Chuck helped Sally with the dishes, enjoyed a long, lingering and inflaming kiss on the front porch, then took off for his bachelor's quarters in the rear of the Sheriff's office. The first thing he did when he got there was to go over the mud from Jud's shoes with a magnifying glass. There wasn't anything that looked like wood chips or splinters. If Barlow had been to the Bishop's, he'd gone before prowling around the swamp.

He wasn't even sure that he'd been asleep, when Pop came in and shook him by the shoulder, but he must have been, because he could smell the coffee on the stove.

He was still half asleep when they arrived at the Bishop farm. Pop parked the station wagon behind the house, well out of sight and they settled down in the hayloft to wait. From there, they had a good view of the whole yard. Pop had dressed warm, but Chuck was wearing a light jacket and he was cold. He sat and shivered while the sky lightened up in the East and wished he could smoke.

Neither of them heard a car, but when the sun broke over the foothills, Chuck looked outside and caught his breath. Jud Barlow—there was no mistaking the bulk of the man—was coming through the orchard.

Pop sensed there was something going on and looked too. He grunted and tugged at his ear when he saw Jud.

The trapper was dressed in the same khaki trousers and jacket he had worn the day before, and he was carrying a shotgun in the crook of his right arm. He walked briskly until he reached the area near the woodpile, then slowed down and began pacing back and forth, looking at the ground.

Chuck's heart began to pound, when he realized the man was searching for something. Pop started to turn around, as though he intended to leave the loft, but Chuck grabbed him by the arm.

"Let him find what he's looking for!" he hissed in the sheriff's ear. "Then, we'll have him!"

"Shucks," Pop said, out loud. "he ain't going to find nothing. We went over every inch of that ground."

The sound of his voice carried and Chuck looked outside. Sure enough, Jud was staring up at the loft. Then, as though their presence didn't mean anything to him, he started walking back and forth again.

"Let's see what he's up to," Pop said cheerfully, as though he had never pulled a boner in his life, and led the way down the ladder.

Chuck knew what Jud would say —and that's what happened.

"Thought I might find something you fellows missed," Barlow said, in response to Pop's demand that he account for his being there. "Like I told you last night, I read sign pretty good."

Pop didn't seem to realize that he'd probably passed up the chance of a lifetime by letting Jud know they were hiding in the hayloft.

"Oh," the sheriff said, as though pleasantly surprised that the other man wanted to help. "I thought you might be looking for this." He held out his hand, opened it and showed them a dull, brown button.

Chuck stared at it, then looked at Barlow. He was just in time to see the blood drain from the man's face and the shotgun begin to move. Chuck hollered out a warning and went for the .38 in his own holster.

His hand found the butt and he lifted it, crouching, like they'd taught him in the FBI training course. It seemed like an eternity before he could get the revolver up and leveled. Jud's right thumb was pushing off the safety on the shotgun when Chuck's first bullet caught him in the stomach.

The big man flinched and hesitated—that was all. The twin muzzle of the shotgun moved on upward and Chuck triggered bullets from the .38 and expected to be blasted into eternity. Jud suddenly sagged, the shotgun tilted downward and roared, gouging a hole in the hard-packed earth and spattering Chuck with dirt.

Chuck straightened as the big man went down and found his own legs trembling so bad he couldn't take a step. Pop had his .45 out, but hadn't had time to get off a shot. Chuck glared at him.

"Dammit, Pop!" Chuck ex-

ploded weakly, his voice trembling as bad as his legs. "If you'd told me about finding that button, we could've got a confession out of him last night and—not—not—" He stopped, helpless with anger, still shaking from their narrow escape.

Pop tugged at an ear, his face apologetic. "Well, now," he said finally, "I didn't exactly find that button."

Chuck stared at him.

"I pulled it off his coat—last night," Pop admitted.

Chuck sat down on the ground, the empty .38 still in his hand. "Pop," he began, but his voice failed him.

The sheriff was wagging his head. "I never saw nothing like it," he marvelled.

Chuck turned the sentence over in his mind. "Like what?" he asked.

"That draw," Pop said. "I didn't know a man could get a gun out that fast. That FBI School is really something. If I was younger, I'd—" He let it hang, but he still wagged his head.

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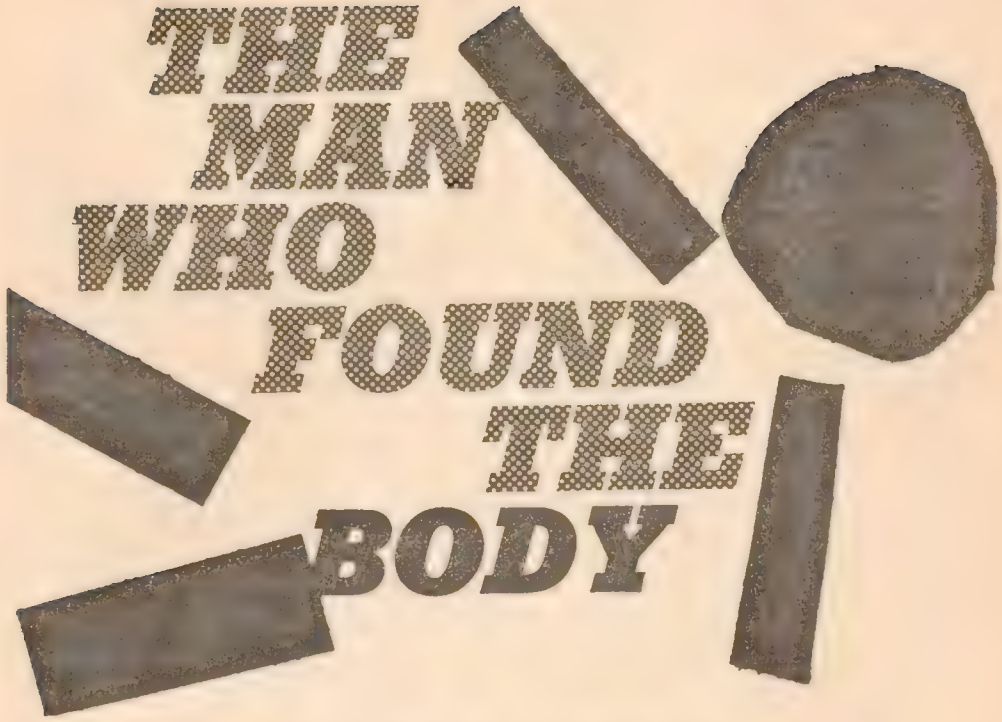

by AVRAM DAVIDSON

In every town or city big enough to have had a murder (and no Federal department or agency can supply that particular statistic) but not so big that people do not know one another, there is always one person whom the Norns have chosen to be pointed out forever after while he does live: a sentence form which there is neither pardon nor escape; *See him? That fellow there—that's the man who found the body!*

The town of Philipsburgh, where I was born and raised, borders onto a large city, and at some places, at present, you can walk across the city line without realizing it; the apartment houses on one side being no different from those on the other. But in my boyhood, in the upside-down days of the Thirties, great stretches of woods and vacant lots divided town from city at almost every point. A creek called the Chickahoah River wanders through the borderland, its path has been straightened and its banks domesticated, but I remember when an unemployed carpenter was found trapping mink and muskrat there. This got a play in the press for a day or two—it was County land or City land, something: *any*way, this put the fellow in the position of the man "who did hunt the Kinge's Deere"—not that they hanged him,

but they took away his traps and he went back on relief again.

Neither I nor anyone else realized it at the time, but this incident had a deep effect on a man by the name of Archer Slide, who lived in town, and worked—when he worked—as a roofer's helper. He visited the creek and he visited it again and again. Later on he said that he "used to wonder about how it was in them days." He told this to Bob Thorne, a writer for the town paper. Thorne asked him what he meant—what days?

"Ohhh . . ." Archie gestured vaguely. "Trapping . . . hunting . . . *them* days. The olden days. Pioneers. *You* know." And he smiled his lop-sided, embarrassed smirk, an expression we were to see a lot of—had already, in fact, seen a lot of.

Thorne didn't ask if the vision of a younger America that come to Archie only when he read about the illicit trapper. Perhaps he had already thought of it, but no one was deeply interested in his thoughts. His boss never talked to him of matters unconnected with shingle-nails or buckets of tar. His landlady appeared once a week to say, like one performing a ritual duty, "I'll take your rent, now, Archie." Of course she didn't always get it, times being what they were, and didn't always expect to. At such periods she said, "Well, I dunno. I got to speak to the Mister." The Mister never spoke to Archie. Slide had some family—an aunt of his own age, whom he visited when he could leave a little money there, a dollar, even a half dollar, pennies for the kids. In that drab, dingy, crowded and smelly little flat, Archie was listened to—for a while, anyway; but the aunt had too much to do and the kids were eager to get out and spend the penny.

When work slackened Archie had stopped paying his dues in the veteran's organization he had belonged to. There'd been talk of a bonus—of a march on Washington—he'd had words with the officials of the post. After that he never came around. When he could afford it he drank beer in a place called Lauber's. There he was ready to offer his opinion on sports and politics, but the place had its acknowledged leaders of talk, Archie wasn't one of them and didn't get many words in edgewise or otherwise.

But when he went walking through the woods along the Chickahoah nobody interfered with him. In the Spring and Summer and Fall others went walking there for one reason or another, one more wasn't noticed. In the Winter nobody went there except Archie, so

no one else knew he was there. It was as simple as that.

At this time he was in his mid-thirties. He had long arms and a long, furrowed face that didn't take the razor very well. Thorne remembered seeing him around, everyone had seen him around, it was a small town—and it came to him afterwards that Archie'd had the same look on his face—half smile, half smirk. Sort of saying, "Well, that *was* kind of clever, wasn't it?"

One early morning in late Fall Archie was wandering along through the woods. The first snow had fallen. He said that he noticed the red pocket-book first. Later, he said that he'd first noticed the odd snow-covered shape, and when he went closer, he then noticed the pocket-book. Half a mile away was a small lunch-room that was just opening up and Archie burst in there, breathing heavily, "very excited like"—the owner later deposed—and demanded to be allowed to use the phone.

"It's an emergency", he said.

"What's the matter?" the old man asked. He had had a bad night. This made him irritable. He seldom had good nights.

"Gimme the phone, I got to phone!"

"You tell me what it is and *I'll* phone", the old man said. After all, it was *his* phone. But Archie couldn't see it. The old man said he was pushed around, Archie denied it, anyway Archie got the phone and he flipped the hanger and got Operator and told her he wanted the police. All this time the old man, Herman Hotaling, was yelling that he would have Archie arrested.

He finally got the police and told them his message. Then he called up the newspaper. Both places received his report with scepticism, and he thought they might not come. But they did. The police were still using big black touring-cars and Archie rode out with them as far as the road went, guiding them the rest of the way on foot. The body was still there.

The newsmen arrived before the ambulance and the Chief of Police, and they took pictures of Archie pointing out the body. Not until they lifted it onto the stretcher did they discover that the woman's head had been crushed, for the snow had hidden everything.

"It must of happened before it stopped snowing", Archie said.

It was an obvious remark, but he seemed quite proud of it, and he looked at everybody and smirked. The Chief looked at him.

"What did you say you was doing here when you found her?" he asked.

"Well, I couldn't sleep", Archie told him, "and I got up and I walked out to see how the woods looked, you know, the first snow and all."

The Chief continued looking at him. He was an excellent specimen of the species Great Red-Faced Police Chief. He said absolutely nothing. He was not the kind of man to whom one could confide, with any expectation of belief, that, just happening to arise early to look at the snow, one came by accident upon the body of a woman with her head bashed in.

The story not only made the front page of the local paper, but those of the city papers as well. The woman's name was Clara Lightfoot and she was described as "a beautiful show-girl." Had she been named Mazie Baumgarten, had her occupation been that of housewife, it is, I think, safe to say that the city papers would never have given the story more than a line or two. But —*Clara Lightfoot!* It was almost as good as Starr Faithful as a front page name. And—*beautiful show-girl*! Her picture showed the vacant, pudgy features so popular in the late Twenties when it was taken. Her dingy room revealed no later pictures. The truth was that Clara Lightfoot's last job in show business had been in the back row of a grind-show chorus some years back. Since then she had gained her living in the sordid, squalid manner available to a woman of no talent and disposable morals; her "beauty" had been lost between the gin-mills where she met her "friends" and the flea-bag hotels were she entertained them.

The latter part of this information was not revealed in any great detail by the papers. On their pages she was once again "a beautiful show-girl". On the same pages was the information that the Town police were still "holding Archer Slide, the man who found the body. Chief Mathew T. Loam said, 'I am not satisfied with this man's story.' Asked if he thinks that Slide, part-time roofer's helper, was implicated in the slaying, Chief Loam said, 'I think he knows more than he's saying.' "

The Chief was, as his subordinates said when he was out of hearing, "in his glory." He had never had before a case which achieved noteriety outside the town limits. His swollen features adorned the picture sections of three tabloids. He entertained detectives of high rank from the City where Clara Lightfoot had lived her useless life out. Together they questioned Archie Slide. Nobody thought to say that *he* was in his glory, too, but he

was. For once people wanted to know what he had to say. In fact, they insisted on his speaking. Doubtless, in their own experienced way, they were persuasive.

Archie spoke.

He had been trapped, the papers said, by clever questioning.

They had learned by this time that Archie had been in the A.E.F. "War Veteran" fits better into headlines than "Part-time Roofer's Helper". *War Veteran Admits Show-Girl Slaying*, the tabloids screamed. *Local Man Admits Guilt In Murder Of City Woman*, Bob Thorne's paper had it.

" 'My suspicions were aroused', Chief Loam declared, 'by the suspect's improbable story which he told to explain his presence at the scene of the crime. I discovered that he had been lately telling people around town that he was going to do something that would make him famous. Confronted by our evidence, he broke down and admitted his guilt.' "

Archie talked and talked and talked. He was photographed all over again, surveying the "scene of the crime" with his crooked grin. From his room the papers obtained a picture of him in his overseas cap, and they printed that, too, although Archie had never gotten further overseas than Sandy Hook. *"Local Veterans' Head Describes Show-Girl Killer As 'Trouble Maker'*," was the sub-heading. In his cell Archie was supplied with all the papers and his meals were brought in from the same restaurant which supplied the Chief, for it was tacitly conceded that the town's only murderer could not be expected to eat beans and jailhouse soup.

According to the City tabloids, which tended to minimize the role of Chief Loam, it was the clever questioning of the metropolitan detectives which cracked the case.

"Slide's first story that he had noticed the slain show-beauty's red pocketbook did not jibe with his later insistence that he had seen the body first. This aroused the suspicions of Detective-Captain Rourke, under whose keen questioning the unemployed war veteran finally broke."

Speedy Trial Expected In Red Pocketbook Murder.

Archie said that he had noticed Clara Lightfoot in the Paris Bar, one of her regular rendezvous. He had asked her to go out with him and she agreed. They had met many times.

Killer's Account Of Love Trysts.

She wanted to marry him, but his lack of steady work prevented them.

" 'Sure I noticed them together',

said Ed Hantf, Paris Bartender; 'but I never thought anything of it. He looked like any other guy'."

Despondent of the future, the two had planned to End It All Together. "Slide says he remembers striking the fatal blow, but nothing after that until some time later. 'I must have blacked out', the former Coast Artillery man said."

Hunt For Missing Murder Weapon Continues.

Archie couldn't recall where he had thrown it.

Meanwhile, Bob Thorne was not satisfied, and began to do some sleuthing of his own. He pointed out to Chief Loam that none of Archie's clothes bore any trace of blood. It reemed unlikely to him that Archie could have had the money to go adventuring in City bars.

"That don't mean nothing", the Chief said. "He admitted he done it, didn't he?" He was annoyed, and so was Archie; and they were even more annoyed when a man who gave his name as Leslie Roberts walked into the office of a city tabloid and insisted that he had committed the murder himself.

" 'I am satisfied that we have the guilty man right here in jail,' Chief Loam declared. 'This other fellow is probably just a thrill-seeker.' "

Who Killed Clara Lightfoot? Was It THIS *Man?* (Picture of Archie). *Or* THIS? (Picture of Leslie Roberts, a thin-faced, mop-haired, nervous man.)

Roberts said that he had wrapped up the murder weapon in one of his shirts and flung it into a trash can somewheres. Four days had gone by and the City police were not very hopeful of finding the bundle—assuming it had ever been there at all—but they searched the trash cans in the neighborhood anyway. And—to the surprise of everyone except Leslie Roberts—they found it.

At once—in two of the three tabloids—Archie slipped from the glory of page 3 to a single sentence at the bottom of the "Continued on page 25" paragraph, next to the recipes and the horoscope. Leslie Roberts lived in a Greenwich Village studio where he made plaster of paris casts. *Bohemian Sculptor Tells Murder Tale,* screamed tabloid A. Tabloid B asked: *Did The Hands* (picture of hands) *That Did* THIS (picture of 'sculpture') *Do* THAT? (picture of body). Apparently they did. Roberts picked up Clara in one of the gin-mills, they drove out in his car, stopped at the park; there was a drunken quarrel, and he hit her with one of the car-tools. That was that.

Or almost that. For tabloid C

printed, as was its custom, a manufactured scene called a "composograph"—that is, it was composed of a posed picture of a man cowering beneath the upraised pieces of rubber hose held by a number of men in police uniform. Their backs were to the camera, but on the body of the menaced man was superimposed the head of Archie Slide, wearing—for no reason save that of sensational journalism—his overseas cap. *Was War Veteran Beaten To Provide Cops With "Confession?"* asked the paper. The photo was, with an eye to the law of libel, labelled as being a "composograph," but none of the paper's readers knew what manner of fish or fowl this was. The line was in small print, anyhow, and people who can read small print do not read tabloids.

Now, as a matter of honest fact, Chief Loam had not allowed anyone to lay a finger on Archie, let alone a hunk of hose. But it finally sank into that massive skull that Archie was *not* the killer, that the local police had been made to look like fools. True, so had the City detectives, but *they* now had the genuine slayer to distract attention from the lapse, and Loam had nothing; and he was engaged in giving Archie a going-over with the flat of his huge right hand when the copies of tabloid C arrived. And, almost immediately afterwards, so did a delegation from the local veterans' organizations, who now suddenly decided that Archie was not a "trouble-maker," but the victim of a "miscarriage of justice." The murder charge had to be dismissed, of course, but the Judge shared Chief Loam's rage. He had not had an opportunity to pass a sentence of death in 35 years, and he was looking forward to the event with senile eagerness. Archie was arraigned on counts of Obstructing Justice, Giving False Reports, Assault (i.e., jostling old Herman Hotaling away from his phone), and Trespass. It looked as if he would pass most of the year in jail, but the lawyer the veterans hired got him off, after all.

As for Leslie Roberts, *his* attorney dug up the fact that Clara Lightfoot had twice been arrested for rolling drunks, and got him a light sentence for manslaughter.

Innocent or not, the local householders decided that they didn't want Archie Slide on their roofs. Bob Thorne got him a janitor's job, the work was steady, so financially he was better off than before. I can recall him clearly, coming home from work, slouched, his long arms swinging, his dirty hat crunched

down on his head. The kids would give him a clear path, clutch at one another nervously, and hiss: "See that guy? He's the man that found Clara Lightfoot's body! Honest! Crossmyheartandhopetodie!" Usu- he would hear us, and a shadow of his old smirk would start, but it faded out; and he'd walk away faster than before. He still hung around Lauber's, but they got tired of his story before long—unless one of the regulars would be there with someone new—then Archie would be pointed out. Now and then, visibly dissatisfied with both oblivion and he-found-the-body-fame, Archie once again would mumble over his beer that he was going to do something that would make him famous. But no one listened.

By and by the old Judge died of kidney trouble, the Chief succumbed to a heart attack in the company of a lady friend whose name and existence was discreetly hushed up, Bob Thorne went out West for the A.P. or the U.P., and nobody bothered to point out Archie unless things were very dull indeed. His mumblings passed unnoticed.

Sometime during those years he got hold of a rifle and a single cartridge. And he began to write his life story, with many erasures and crossings-out, full of phrases half-remembered from the tabloids and the pulps and confession magazines. He wrote it on foolscap with a soft-lead pencil. In one part he insisted that he *had*, after all, carried on a love-affair with "the glamorous show-girl," that she had been "madly infatuated" with him, but that he had spurned her affections at last, thus driving her into the fatal hands of Leslie Roberts. Overwhelmed with remorse, he had confessed to the crime of which he felt himself partly guilty even though he "did not actually strike the fatal blow." And he urged the papers to publish his story as a warning to the young people of the United States. Thus he prepared to do that Something of which he had often spoken, Which Would Make Him Famous. He fired the single cartridge through the roof of his mouth.

This was on a Friday night. The body was discovered on a Saturday night. The Monday morning papers for December 8, 1941, gave him a two-line paragraph on page 25, next to the recipes and the horoscope.

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